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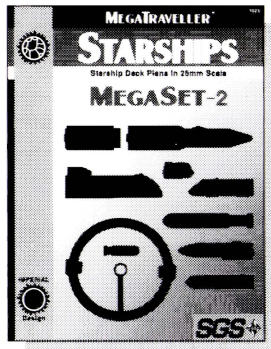

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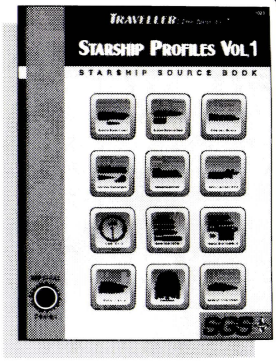

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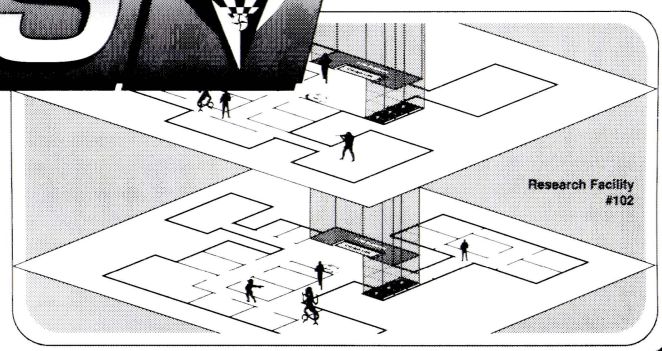

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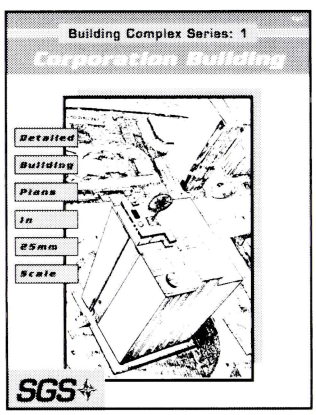

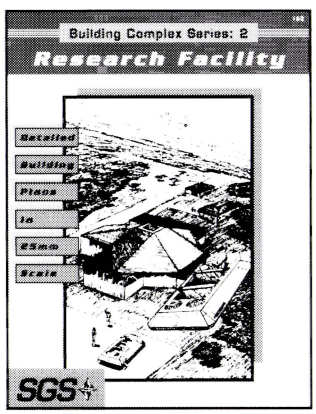

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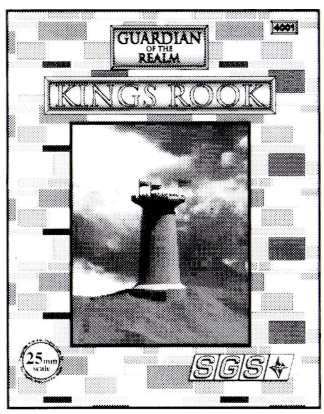

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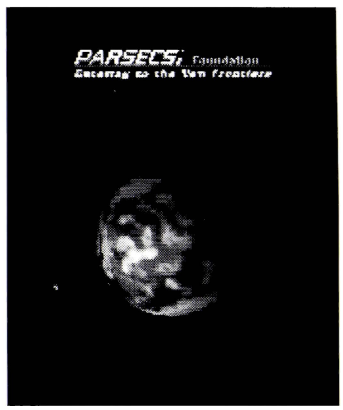

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DIGEST GROUP'S

The MegaTraveller JOURNAL

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HELM REPORT

DGP EDITORIAL NEWS AND INFORMATION: *From the Desk of Joe Fugate*

Well for this last issue of the *Journal,* your person-at-the-helm is Joe Fugate, rather than Rob Caswell. Rob has gone on to other pursuits and has left the DGP staff, and we wish him well. His work may appear here and there from time to time in other DGP products, but he's no longer part of the staff per se. His art and his genius has been a real asset, as I'm sure many of you will agree. Thanks, Rob!

Other changes are in the wind too, as some of you may know by now. This issue of the *Journal* is to be DGP's last **Traveller** product. Yes, you heard right — we're not going to support Traveller after this — this is it. From now on, we're going to pour all our attention and loving care into our new game, AI™.

As much as we love Traveller (and we're true fanatics about the game), we've decided to no longer support the game with GDW's release of *Traveller the New Era.* There are lots of reasons for this, the most significant being our desire to control a game's direction ourselves. GDW owns Traveller — we don't. And believe me, we've asked GDW if they would ever consider selling the rights to the game to us, but we always get a firm and definite "no."

I can understand their position — were I in their shoes, I wouldn't sell Traveller either. After all, Traveller is the game that put GDW firmly into the roleplaying game market *big time.* If for no other reason, GDW has a lot of sentimental attachment to the game, and they and Marc Miller have a place in history with Traveller. It was the first of the science-fiction roleplaying games, and many still consider it one of the all-time greats. So DGP buying the rights to Traveller isn't an option, even though I know several of you have mentioned the idea to us, and yes we did ask. But, alas, *it's not to be.*

So, what do we do? We needed to pick some strategic time to change to doing our own game, and to get out of the "puppet on a string" relationship as a licensee. *Traveller the New Era* seemed like as good a time as any to make that shift. Plus, Marc Miller isn't actively involved in the design of *New Era,* so us "old-timers" here on the staff aren't as interested in the direction of the game minus Marc's influence.

Right or wrong, as the game's original designer, Marc Miller was Traveller to us. Somehow, it's just not the same. Even though *New Era* may be the best thing since sliced bread, enough is changing that we don't feel Traveller is still the game we fell in love with. But then, maybe we're just too set in our ways.

So don't take our word for it. Take a look at *New Era.* Play it. See what you think of it.

Meanwhile, we're going to be off romping in our own universe we've created for AI™. And after you've looked at *New Era,* come take a peek at AI™. If you like how we did Traveller at all, you'll find we've also thrown our heart and soul into our own game and you just might find it's as fun (or more fun) than our Traveller work. But you decide. Nothing says you can't play both games, you know!

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Since we're "getting out of the Traveller business" that means many of our products are now permanently out of print. If you've been waiting to buy some of our products, you are probably too late. We only have back issues of #3 ($12.95) still available — Journal #1 and Journal #2 are sold out. We do have a few copies of Travellers' Digest #19, 20, and 21 ($2.95 each) in case you happen to want one of them.

We also have copies of FASA's High Passage magazine ($5 each). Even though these magazines have been out of print a long time, if you've never seen the material in them, you are missing something. I have two copies of each issue in my personal collection, just so I'll always have a good copy in case something happens to one of them.

If you do decide to order something we still have in stock, be sure to include an extra 10% for postage and handling (minimum of $2.50). But you better not dally any longer if something you want is listed above. It's likely to clear out pretty fast now that people know we're selling out of everything Traveller.

Other than the magazine back issues, none of our other products are available, and we do not plan on reprinting any of them at this point. As for future products, the casualties include: *Zhodani and Droyne,* alien book 3; *K'kree and Hivers,* alien book 4; *Humans and Non-humans,* alien book 4; *Robots and Cyborgs,* and *Onnesium Quest.* None of these products will ever be produced, which is too bad. But there's never really a good time to change direction, just so-so times and terrible times. With *New Era* throwing a kink in our schedule anyway, we decided it was now or never.

SPECIAL OFFER TO SAY THANKS

Even though the release of AI™ is still months away (it's still being playtested as we speak), those Traveller players who would like to reserve an advance copy of AI™ can do so by sending us $15 (or you can call us and use your credit card). This is a 40% savings off the full final price of $25. Once the game is released, we will automatically ship you, postage paid, an *autographed* edition of the game. But this offer is only good if you do it *before* the game is released, and if you are a Traveller gamer. To prove you are a Traveller gamer, we do ask that you answer this question for us: "What rare earth element is used in hull jump grids?"

We are providing this special deal to say thanks to all our faithful Traveller readers over the years, and to encourage you to take a look at AI™. We think AI™ is shaping up to be quite a delightful game — even more so than Traveller in some respects (in our *unbiased* opinion, of course). In this issue, we've included a short 3-page article to give you some

details of AI's conception. We didn't want to take up *too much* of this issue pushing AI™, since this is, after all the *MegaTraveller* Journal. But we felt we could justify three pages to tell you at least a little bit about our new brainchild.

Or if you are really dedicated to DGP anything and you would be willing to be a playtester for these final rounds as we put the finishing touches on AI™, you can also consider that, but you'll have to hurry. You have to promise you'll actually try the material out on your group, and that you'll file a detailed critique document back to us on your findings within 3 weeks of receiving each package. If this is something you would like to do, let us know *as soon as possible.* We'll only take the first few offers we receive, and you must be serious. If we send the material to you and we never hear from you again, you'll be on our black list (grin)!

CONTACT US...

If you have a credit balance with us (that is, you overpaid us on an order for some reason, or we overcharged you), we'd like to pay you what we owe you rather than keep the credit balance on our system. Since we're selling out our current Traveller line, there's not much you can buy (unless of course, you want to follow us into AI™). So *contact us if you'd like to get your money.*

We'd like to clear up all these credit balances (some of which are our fault). If we don't hear from you over the next six months or so, we'll just mail you a check and get it off our accounting records. But if you've moved, you'd better contact us or the check may never catch up to you. If your credit balance is less than $1.00, we will just write it off, assuming you don't care unless we hear from you. Please contact us!

THIS FINAL ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL

So this is it folks, the last *MegaTraveller Journal.* It's been an interesting 8 years, to say the least. We're proud to present *Lords of Thunder* in this final issue, which is a marvelous William H. Keith adventure. And, as many of you can see, we've also got a William H. Keith cover to go with it. Nothing like a cover painting by the author to get some of the mood and idea of what he had in mind for his adventure.

For those of you who have been with Traveller since the "golden era" of the early eighties, you'll also recognize Bill's work as one of the two famous brothers Keith (J. Andrew is his brother). These two prolific gentlemen were responsible for much of the look and feel of Traveller. Their work was the model we used here at Digest Group for what made a *good* Traveller product. So it's rather fitting I think to "go out with a bang" by having a fabulous Keith adventure and Keith cover to go with it.

I have always liked the adventures done by the Keiths — they always have a delightful mix of combat, mystery, intrigue, weird aliens, and cool artifacts to decipher. And this adventure has all of this, and more. Plus Bill has always been especially good with aliens —he and Andy did most of the groundwork for detailing the K'kree, so you've got a treat in store for you.

There's also a sector map, world UWP data, and library data for the Gateway Sector in this issue. That's clear across the Imperium from our usual haunt of the Domain of Deneb, but we couldn't resist this new material on the K'kree, so we made an exception.

For those of you who didn't get a copy of the *Flaming Eye,* we've reprinted the Far Trader deck plans in this issue, also. Plus, we can't leave anything alone when we reprint it, so we've tweaked the plans a bit so they're even better than the ones in *Flaming Eye.*

And in case you never got a copy of the *Referee's Gaming Kit,* there are tidbits from that product strewn throughout this issue of the *Journal.* And like I said before, we don't "just reprint" things when we reuse them like this. We also add some new little extras.

Given this is the last Journal, I went the extra mile in this issue with Traveller Q&A and it is by far the largest, most informative Q&A I have ever done. I hope you find it quite helpful, and will keep you going on Traveller for a long time to come even though we are absent.

ALL GOOD THINGS MUST END

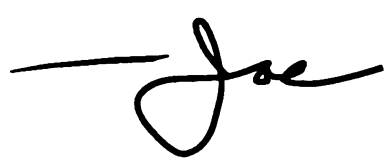
This is a real transition time for DGP. Until we get AI™ ready to publish, we are keeping a low profile as far as game conventions are concerned. So you might not see much of us this summer. Don't despair. Rather than take our minuscule staff and put them on the road all summer (instead of designing and writing AI™), we have opted to stay behind closed doors until we get our big new project close to completion.

You know it's tough giving birth to a new gaming brainchild. Everyone wants to know when its going to be done, and we don't work like that where a new game and our reputation are concerned. We will release the game when it's ready and it's right, not before. I know, I know, that may not be a smart business move if you're only in it for the money, but we'd rather be slow and top-notch than on time and second-rate.

The money's nice, but first and foremost, we want it to be an effort we're proud of. It must be loads of fun and play as smooth as silk or we're just going to keep it in the oven a little longer. This means we'll guess at dates to make people happy, and them we'll miss 'em because we decide it just ain't going to cut the mustard. Which is what we've done.

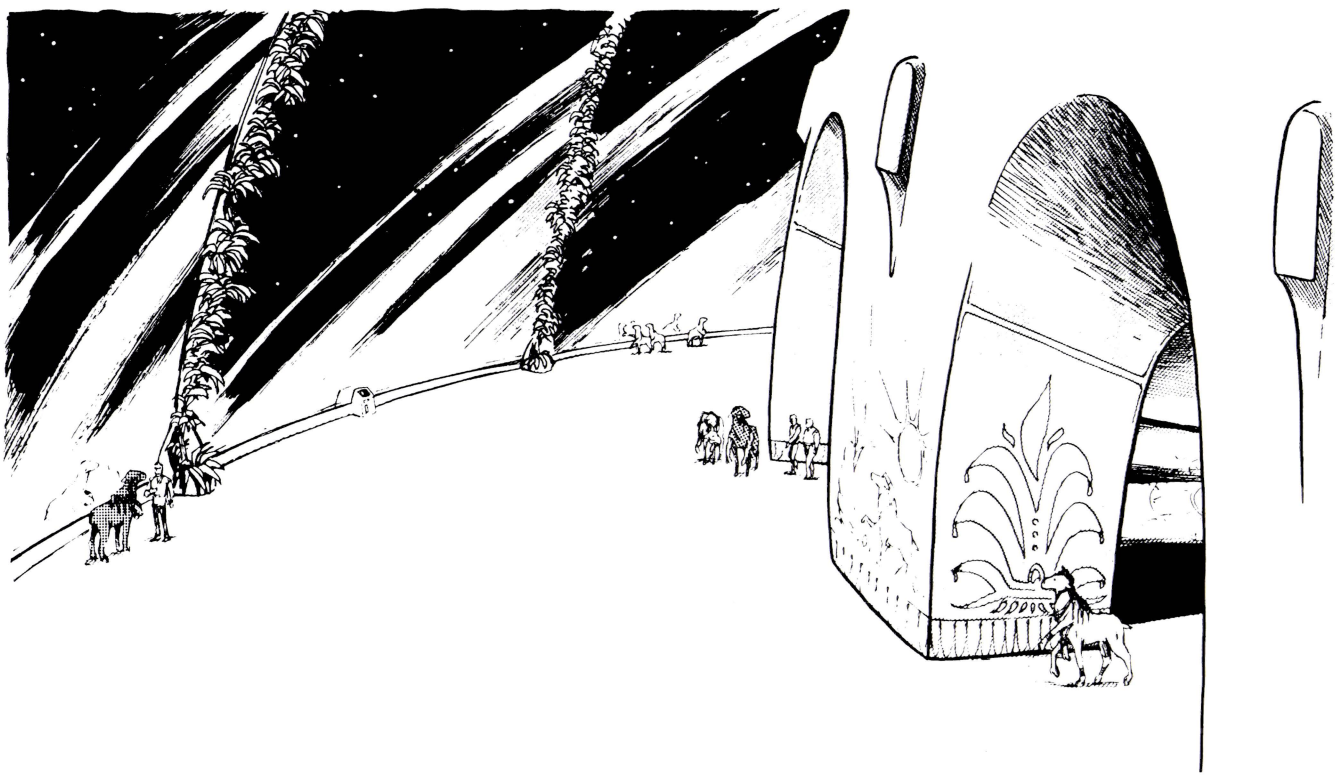
So when is AI™ coming? How about this summer? Or may this time next year? What if I at least tell you it's a lot closer to ready than it was this time last year? It'll come out, that much I can *guarantee* without blinking an eye. And it will be worth the wait, believe me.

Well it's been fun, everyone. Hope to see many of you still through the pages of AI™. In the meantime, we hope you like this issue of the Journal. We did it for you, our loyal readers. Enjoy.



LORDS OF THUNDER

A GRAND CAMPAIGN: *By William H. Keith Jr.*



Mike Vilardi

Original Concept, Design, and Development by Michael T. Shozi and Stafford R. Greene

Sector Geography Designed by Thomas A. Dundee

Written by William H. Keith, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

Digest Group Publications is proud to present William H. Keith's *Lords of Thunder* — an extensive set of source material for Traveller campaigning. Many hours of delightful adventuring in the greatest tradition of Traveller await you!

Lords of Thunder is to be used by a referee who is familiar with Traveller/MegaTraveller. A familiarity with the basic background of Traveller aliens is useful since this campaign is set in a sector well outside the Imperial region. A knowledge of the nonhuman major race known as the K'kree would be an advantage for the players, and helpful for the referee.

Lords of Thunder includes everything needed to create several interrelated Traveller adventures. Included are complete stats on the Gateway Sector — which includes over two hundred worlds, several major and mutually hostile interstellar governments, *and* a new threat presented by a K'kree warlord of the region. Adventures include trading exotic goods, hunting pirates, assisting in a K'kree guerrilla war, and the opportunity to solve a mystery of cosmic significance!

STANDARDS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The year is 1120 of the Imperial calendar, 5638 A.D. by the reckoning of the Solomani of Earth.

This campaign takes place in the fictional universe of MegaTraveller. Four years ago the human Imperium was shattered by civil war, a continuing war with no clear advantage for any of the factions as of yet. The human-dominated states of the Gateway Sector are worried. Though Gateway Sector lies outside the boundaries of Imperial space, the Imperium has nonetheless been a stabilizing influence for centuries. With the Imperium absorbed in its own troubles, the possibility of all of Gateway Sector exploding into war is very real. In addition, agents of the K'kree are searching for a stolen relic, and K'kree forces have recently assimilated a human stellar union near the sector's borders.

The future of Gateway Sector has become dark and uncertain.

USING THIS MATERIAL

Lords of Thunder is intended as an extensive guide to the worlds, intrigues, mysteries and adventure possibilities for an entire sector. The referee should feel free to use what she wants and ignore the rest. Included within *Lords of Thunder* are NPCs, rumors, descriptions of worlds and aliens, and several interlinked plots, any of which would make a complete adventure in itself.

Further, the players themselves can to a large extent determine the type of adventure the referee will unfold. Players with military or mercenary characters and a yen for firefights can become involved in running guns to rebels or fighting K'kree

warriors on a conquered world. Players preferring archaeological adventures can search among alien ruins for clues to a secret which might help solve an ancient mystery.

The referee is invited to introduce any changes she feels necessary to fit this material in with her player group's characters or previous adventures or campaigns.

Throughout this material, sections are reserved for the use of the referee only, in order to preserve the elements of surprise and suspense. Player characters (PCs) should not be given access to this information directly — rather, give the information to the PCs as they play out the adventure(s) and encounter the information they seek.

GATEWAY TO ADVENTURE: REFEREE'S NOTES

Lords of Thunder is designed as a complete Traveller/ MegaTraveller campaign. Information is provided to help the referee flesh out detail for an entire sector consisting of over 250 worlds.

The ideal way to present *Lords of Thunder* to a Traveller group is to allow them to set their own course and pace of discovery. A group interested in making money might begin plying the trade routes between Gateway and Swanfei, or smuggling weapons to the occupied worlds within the old Renkard Union. Characters more interested in hiring out as mercenaries might find themselves drawn to the Plavian League or the Megusard Corporate, where on-going, low-level wars are creating a steady demand for soldiers-for-hire.

The way the story unfolds also depends, to a certain extent, on the characters' own resources. We assume, for instance, the group has their own starship: a Far Trader. However, alternate means of transportation will nearly always be available. Characters arriving in the sector aboard commercial transport will find themselves working with groups and agencies that can give them the use of a ship, or they will find the opportunity to get one.

THE ADVENTURE PLOT

Following is a synopsis of the overall plot of the adventure. Feel free to adapt this outline to your own needs as necessary, in order to keep the story moving smoothly.

• The characters arrive in Gateway Sector. The reason for coming is up to the referee, who might wish to have the journey be the logical continuation of a previous adventure.

However, there are several specific NPCs who could bring the characters to Gateway Sector. They are:

—Mari Jollynn, CEO of Jollynnstar Enterprises. She is looking for adventurers to escort a special cargo across the sector.

—Darvin Smith, a rebel leader. He is looking for mercenaries to help in the fight against K'kree invaders on the far side of the sector.

—Dr. Jamis Garwood, an expert on K'kree history. He is looking for adventurers to assist in the recovery of valuable artifacts.

—Vincent Ravenby, a special agent for Gateway Stellar Intelligence (GSI). He is looking for adventurers unknown in the region in order to mount a campaign against pirates.

The characters could be brought to Gateway by rumors about any of these non-player characters, or one of the PCs could have special information—the referee could establish, for example, that the PC knows one of the listed NPCs and has received a message from that NPC.

However it is done, the player characters will begin the adventure at Gateway, capital of the Galian Federation. They should be given as much time (or as little time) as they wish to explore Gateway itself, learning its history and the part it plays in the sector today. Background and details are given in the section entitled *Gateway.*

• While at Gateway, the characters need to at least learn—either through deliberate research or through rumors—of the various states which occupy the sector. They will hear about the danger of war with the Hochiken People's Assembly; of the threat posed by invading K'kree far to trailing (opposite of spinward); and of the predations of various pirate bands, especially the Castran Marauders.

• The characters set out on their initial adventure. They could be escorting passenger liners through pirate-infested regions, or working for the GSI in an attempt to penetrate the Castran Marauders. They could become involved in a plot to smuggle weapons to freedom fighters in the former Renkard Union, or wind up helping Dr. Garwood make contact with an archaeologist named Visirichurva.

Details are left to the referee. This portion of the campaign could be an entire adventure in its own right, complete with battles against pirates and encounters with marauding K'kree warships. During this part of the adventure, the characters should learn more about the K'kree "Empire of Xuruk," and about the notoriety of the pirate band called the Castran Marauders.

There are many types of adventures the characters can become involved in, and the exact nature of the plot may depend on the types of characters the players are using. Several more suggestions are given in the section entitled *Launching The Campaign.*

• At some point in their wanderings, the characters encounter Enli Visirichurva, a rather unorthodox xenoarchaeologist who claims to be carrying a treasure of great value and is on the run from unknown but sinister agents. Visirichurva will contact the adventurers in hopes of getting passage back to Gateway. What he has, Visirichurva insists, must be taken to the Gateway Xenoarchaeological Foundation (GXF).

Visirichurva gives a letter to the characters for safekeeping, insisting that they deliver it in person to Dr. Garwood of the GXF.

During the adventure, thugs in the hire of Trom Vendir, a professional assassin, will kill Visirichurva. The characters will find themselves in possession of a case which contains a fragment of masonry inscribed with unknown writing. They will further discover that Visirichurva's murderers are now chasing *them.*

• Assuming that the characters are able to elude Vendir, they will make it back to Gateway, where Dr. Garwood will offer them Cr500,000 for the valuable "Tablet of the Dawn." If the PCs lose the tablet but manage to deliver Visirichurva's letter, Garwood will still pay their expenses and a reasonable — if moderate — reward.

The campaign *could* end here with a happy resolution.

Alternatively, however, before the characters see Garwood, they are contacted by two other parties, both interested in what they are carrying. Xkluur'gh'grek, a merchant known to humans on Gateway simply as "Grek," insists on an interview with the adventurers in his quarters. And Mari Jollynn wants to make them an offer they can't refuse. Both will be willing to pay the

characters considerably more than Cr500,000 for the tablet.

—Garwood appeals to the characters in the name of science. "This tablet could give us insight into the K'kree, who they are, why they are." Besides, Visirichurva was in the Foundation's pay, and the tablet can properly be said to belong to them.

—Mari Jollynn appeals to the characters' greed. She also claims that the tablet could be the key to keeping the K'kree out of Gateway Sector and appeals to their loyalty to the human race to keep it out of "alien hands."

—Grek will insist that the tablet is the property of the K'kree, an artifact of great importance to his people's cultural history. He will appeal to their sense of justice, to see the tablet returned to its rightful owners.

What the characters decide to do is, of course, up to them.

• No matter which offer they accept, the group will find themselves in trouble!

—If they sell the tablet to Jollynn, they will be attacked while on the way to turn the tablet over to her. At least one attacker will be killed (or, alternatively, recorded by a security camera) and identified by the Gateway Stellar Intelligence (GSI) as an associate of Trom Vendir, the assassin. During the firefight, the tablet will be stolen. Further investigation (checking with GSI files or officials) will show that Vendir is on Gateway and that he was seen meeting earlier with a K'kree at the spaceport — almost certainly Grek.

—If they sell the tablet to Grek, they will be confronted by Jollynn herself soon after. "You fools!" the executive will scream. "Don't you have even a shred of loyalty to your own race? You've ruined it now for us all!"

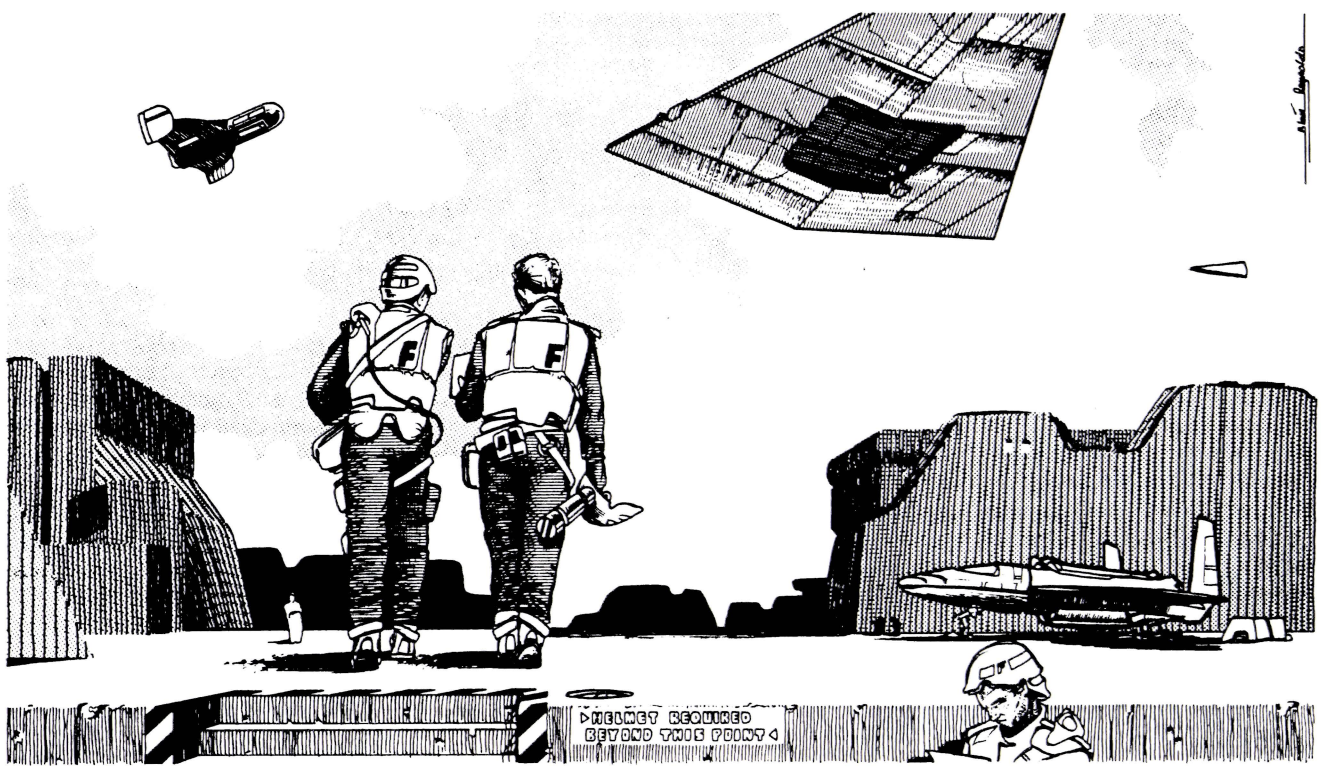
—If they take the tablet to Garwood, it will be stolen by intruders who break in at night and take it from an Institute safe. They will be yelled at by Jollynn, as above. Security cameras within the Foundation spaces will enable the intruders to be identified as some of Vendir's associates.

• Within an hour of Grek acquiring the tablet, the K'kree merchant will depart from Gateway aboard his starship, the *Grra'chgh,* a K'kree Armed Scout/Merchant, described elsewhere in this material. Efforts to stop him, whether initiated by the Foundation or by the characters, will fail. GSI forces may capture Trom Vendir and some of his people, especially if the characters identify him as one of their attackers. He will admit to working for agents of the Xuruk Empire. He stole the tablet "because it represents a priceless part of the K'kree heritage."

The adventure may now take any of several courses. By now, the characters should realize that the Tablet of the Dawn is extraordinarily valuable to several parties: the Foundation, interested in it for its insight into K'kree history; Mari Jollynn, interested in it for unknown reasons; and the K'kree, apparently interested in it for its cultural value, though the characters may suspect that there is something more.

Ideally, the characters will have thought to *photograph* the tablet when they first acquired it, against the possibility of it being destroyed or lost. If they managed to get it to the Foundation, the first thing Garwood will do is holograph the tablet.

If the characters do not think to photograph the artifact themselves, there is still the letter from Visirichurva to Garwood. Hidden in the letter is a clue to a microdot, concealed in the word "it." If the characters cannot figure out what Visirichurva was saying, Garwood will; he will produce a holograph of the missing



BLAIR REYNOLDS

tablet. With the holograph, he will be able to work out a translation of the Tablet of the Dawn.

• The translation of the tablet seems to refer to warfare early in K'kree history. Of special interest to Garwood is a partial description of the mysterious G'naak of K'kree legend. The appearance of a new moon in Kirur's skies (the K'kree homeworld) will be a puzzle which Garwood cannot explain. But the physical description of the G'naak will lead him to a holo of the Charr'chaariv Skeleton, confirming that the G'naak were six-limbed carnivores, and possibly reptilian.

Characters who are quick on the uptake should make the connection between the G'naak described by the tablet and the Charr'chaariv Skeleton and the six-limbed barbarian warriors seen in Jollynn's office. Could the modern-day Droashav be the G'naak of K'kree legend? What is the connection?

• Research by the characters — (see: *Mari Oriso Jollynn* under *Adventure Clues)* — will reveal that Jollynn's bodyguards are Droashav from a primitive world in the Castra Subsector called Trevannic (2219).

The characters may get to Trevannic by any of several routes:

—Garwood may hire them to go to the world in order to study the inhabitants. Little is known about them — save that a few have entered space as mercenaries or pirates — and further study of their physiology and history might confirm their link with the ancient times on Kirur (the K'kree homeworld). The possibility that the Droashav are the ancient G'naak is tremendously exciting to Garwood. The Xenoarchaeological Foundation, he says, will pay Cr1,500,000 for proof that the Droashav are the G'naak.

—The characters themselves may go to Trevannic in order to learn why everyone seems so interested in the Tablet of the Dawn. Anything that important must be worth quite a bit to the right parties.

—Garwood's inquiries (using Gateway's library computers) about Trevannic attract the attention of the GSI, who dispatch Vincent Ravenby to talk to Garwood and the characters. The GSI has been monitoring all access to that information as part of their Project Nova, an operation designed to crack the piracy ring working in this sector. Ravenby may recruit the characters to go to Trevannic to learn more. The GSI believes that Jollynn has links to organized piracy and that Trevannic may hold the key. They will subsidize a scientific expedition by Garwood to the planet as cover for a probe of pirate activities in the Trevannic system.

—Working through a completely different plot, the characters might first learn of Trevannic while investigating pirate activities in the sector for Gateway's GSI. That system is, in fact, one of several secret bases for the Castran Marauders. Jollynn's Droashav bodyguards are an indication that Jollynnstar's CEO has a seamy past, one connected with pirate activities in the sector. A subsequent encounter with Visirichurva will reveal K'kree interest in the tablet, and the link with the ancient G'naak. The GSI could, at that time, authorize the expedition as described above, with the characters going along to covertly investigate pirate activities in the Trevannic system.

• Once at Trevannic, the characters will have two sets of discoveries to make. The referee should arrange things so that the PCs have to work for the information, but not make things impossible for them.

—There is a secret pirate base located within Trevannic's asteroid moon. The base, one of several, has been constructed by the pirates inside the hangar bays and caverns of what appear to be old alien constructs within the asteroid. The base is used to refuel and equip pirate ships between raids. The characters will learn of this aspect of the pirates' operations either by maintaining a watch on the moon from the planet's surface (a powerful telescope will show captured freighters docking with the moonlet), by infiltrating the pirate operations, or by being captured and taken there.

—The modern Droashav are, indeed, the descendants of the race which terrorized the K'kree thousands of years ago. Trevannic's moon was their starship, a generation ship which took hundreds or thousands of years to cross from world to world. It escaped the chaos of the K'kree advance into space, crossed hundreds of light years, and arrived, by chance, here. The relationship will be proven if the characters can reach the Hall of the Ages, a cavern within the asteroid starship where holographic imagery is projected in the air around them as they walk along the corridor.

• Resolution of the adventure is, as always, up to the players. Possibilities include: organizing a Droashav revolt against the pirates who control their world; escaping in a captured pirate space vessel and getting help; or somehow tricking the pirates into thinking that the characters have joined them, then escaping. If the characters can make contact either with the GSI or with a Galian pirate hunterfleet, they can bring in reinforcements which will force the pirates to surrender or flee.

• Once the pirates have been defeated, the players will discover that they have acquired a sizable body of information. In particular, they will have discovered the homeworld of the legendary G'naak. Various clues acquired along the way suggest that the K'kree have been searching for this world, led to the Gateway Sector by clues uncovered within the Two Thousand Worlds. The Tablet of the Dawn was one of these. The enigmatic reference to the "constellation of the ghr'rr," together with the description of the G'naak, had led them first to the Gateway Sector. The K'kree merchant Grek, and others, had amassed considerable information on Trevannic through the Gateway library. He was awaiting only the arrival of the Tablet of the Dawn, which he has now acquired.

The characters should be able to guess, from the evident K'kree interest in finding Trevannic, that they are about to do something about it.

• The characters will be faced by a final challenge. Can they put the clues about K'kree history together and guess that the K'kree may be about to attack Trevannic?

—If they do not connect K'kree interest in Trevannic with the possibility the K'kree might launch an attack on the world, then at some later date, the characters will learn that a large K'kree battlefleet appeared at Trevannic, destroyed the planet's moon-fortress, and proceeded to bomb the world's surface into radioactive slag. By the time the Galian Federation or other vessels can respond, the K'kree are long gone.

—If they do make the connection, they must convince someone in authority — either the commanding admiral of the Galian hunterfleet or someone highly placed in the GSI (such as Vincent Ravenby) — that a K'kree attack is a possibility. Details are given in the section entitled *Saving the Planet.*

ADVENTURE CLUES

Several artifacts, non-player characters, and events have been introduced as clues which will lead the characters toward the resolution of this campaign. During the course of the campaign, the referee should drop the following clues, presenting them as seemingly random (and generally unconnected) events. Some of these clues are essential to the unfolding of the plot, others are not. The following is a list of all such clues, together with possible ways in which they might be introduced.

• **Enli Visirichurva (NPC):** An adventurer and dealer in alien antiquities. Several months ago, he stole the *Tablet of Dawn*, a K'kree artifact of great age and value. When the player characters encounter Visirichurva, he will be seeking passage to Gateway. Unknown agents are following him, and he will be willing to pay both for passage and for protection. He carries with him a small, locked trunk.

Visirichurva will die at some point during the adventure, assassinated by his unknown pursuers. The referee should arrange things so that the characters come into possession of Visirichurva's trunk at that time. They will also receive from Visirichurva a letter which contains a hidden, microscopic holograph of the tablet.

• **Dr. Jamis Feshna Garwood (NPC):** Encountered on Gateway, Dr. Garwood is a prestigious member of the Gateway Xenoarchaeological Foundation. Garwood will be an important source of information on K'kree history, artifacts, culture, and language. He will be able to translate the inscription on the *Tablet of the Dawn* and will be an important source of information on certain aspects of K'kree culture normally hidden from outsiders. He will also be able to show them a holograph of the *Charr'chaariv Skeleton.*

The characters will learn about Garwood from Enli Visirichurva. They might also meet him independently if they are on Gateway and searching for information about the K'kree.

• **Xkluur'gh'grek (NPC):** A K'kree merchant living in Gateway. Most humans refer to him as "Grek." The characters may meet him (and his travelling companions, since K'kree are seldom alone) through Dr. Jamis Garwood while studying K'kree history or customs, or he may approach them independently with an offer to buy the *Tablet of the Dawn.* He will be able to tell them about the *Xaar'keer!* — the so-called "Xuruk Empire" — though he claims to have nothing to do with that offshoot of "the Great Herd." Grek is, in fact, an agent for the Xaar'keer!. He will buy or steal the Tablet of the Dawn at the earliest opportunity and return with it to Xabthar. His interest in the Tablet of the Dawn and his curiosity about *Trevannic* are clues to K'kree interest in that world. The fact that his ship can be traced heading toward Xabthar suggests the Xuruk Empire's specific interest in Trevannic and the Droashav.

• **Mari Oriso Jollynn (NPC):** CEO of Jollynnstar Enterprises, this NPC may be encountered on Gateway. She was once a pirate in the Castra and Ashton subsectors and is accompanied by two mercenary bodyguards called *Droashav.*

She will be extremely evasive if questioned about her bodyguards, admitting only that she "acquired" them during travels "on business" to trailing (opposite of spinward). The characters must question some of Jollynn's employees — secretaries or low-level executives at Jollynnstar — to learn that the Droashav are natives of the planet *Trevannic* (2219).

Gateway's xenobiological computer library will have some information, but it seems that very little is known about this primitive reptilian race. Some have been identified as members of pirate raiding parties, in company with human pirates. Others serve as mercenaries with various forces, including the Plavians, and with refugee forces operating within the Megusard Union.

If pressed, she will admit to having visited a world called Trevannic "long ago, in my youth." She will categorically deny any suggestion that she once was a pirate and will suggest that she acquired her bodyguards while visiting that world as part of a sector-wide survey. "They are very loyal," she will say. "I hired them to protect me while I was there, and they've been with me ever since." There will be no official records of Jollynn participating in such a survey.

• **Droashav:** Pseudoreptilian minor race native to the planet *Trevannic* (2219). They are carnivores possessing six limbs and standing 1.3 meters tall. Player characters familiar with the *Charr'chaariv Skeleton* should see a definite similarity in size and overall structure. The player characters may first encounter them in the persons of *Mari Jollynn*'s bodyguards, or as pirate or mercenary NPCs. A visit to either Trevannic or its moon will reveal that world as the Droashav's homeworld.

Close study of the Droashav (especially genetic study of tissue samples) however, will demonstrate that they are not native to Trevannic. Their six-legged symmetry is alien to that world, though their biochemistries are compatible (i.e., they can eat most native Trevannian lifeforms without being poisoned). Furthermore, certain Droashav legends and their own name for themselves ("Wanderers") all support the idea that the modern Droashav came from somewhere else.

Special Referee's Note: The Droashav are the modern descendents of the G'naak of K'kree legend. (see: *History of the Droashav).* The referee should be very low key about this race. Do not to reveal too much too soon about these beings, since *their identity* is the key to the entire campaign.

• **Charr'chaariv Skeleton:** A fragmentary skeleton uncovered at Charr'chaariv on Kirur, permanently on display at the Xagha of Kalaghee on Kirur. Embedded in rock-hard baked clay, the remains are those of a six-limbed creature which once stood perhaps 1.3 meters tall. The skeleton is badly damaged and is missing most of the skull, as well as the limb extremities. Badly corroded rings of metal encircle the upper limbs. Identified by the K'kree themselves as a G'naak of their prehistory, the remains are outwardly similar to the physiology of the *Droashav* of *Trevannic* and may be linked (at least tentatively) by the player characters to that species.

The characters may hear of the Charr'chaariv Skeleton from *Dr. Garwood,* or they may come upon it during extensive research into K'kree culture and history. Once they learn about the G'naak, research on this legendary race will lead them to photographs of the skeleton, or to Garwood's holos.

Knowledge of the skeleton is essential in order to suggest a link between the ancient G'naak and the modern Droashav.

• **Trevannic:** Independent world located in the Castra Subsector (2219). Homeworld of a minor race — the Droashav — it is the focus of considerable K'kree efforts to discover it.

Clues to Trevannic's existence can be gleaned from various sources. *Mari Jollynn* of Jollynnstar Enterprises has visited the world, and her two bodyguards are native Droashav. The Castran Marauders are a pirate band which frequently uses the Trevannic

system as a hideout, and the characters may learn of Trevannic either by joining the Marauders, or by fighting them. Eventually, the *Xaar'keer!* (Lords of Thunder) will learn of Trevannic through their agent *Xkluur'gh'grek* and will organize a fleet to destroy it.

The characters may hear of the world because the *Lords of Thunder* (Xaar'keer!) have been enquiring about it . . . or because they are enlisted by the K'kree or their agents in order to find and explore it. Or their research into Mari Jollynn's past may turn up Trevannic as the world where she acquired her bodyguards.

• **Trevannic Alpha:** The moon of the world Trevannic, an irregular asteroid body 300 km in diameter in a close eccentric orbit around Trevannic. Outwardly unremarkable, it is the secret location of a pirate base.

Close inspection will reveal that the asteroid was once — long ago — used as a starship. Vast caverns hollowed out of solid rock demonstrate that someone used sophisticated and advanced technology to carve living and storage spaces out of the asteroid. Some portions are currently inaccessible due to damage. The engines can eventually be reached, but are of unfamiliar design and appear to have been fused by great heat. One artifact, once reached, does still work — the Hall of the Ages. Here holographic projections give evidence that the Droashav once visited Kirur. Scenes show Droashav hunter-packs running down K'kree and killing them by clawing them to death in grisly blood-sport. Others show scenes from the war which followed, of the asteroid leaving the Kirur system, and its arrival centuries later around Trevannic.

• **Xaar'keer!:** Translating as "Lords of Thunder," this is a K'kree offshoot, a militant herd committed to the philosophy of *Axavktrr xur* which calls for extermination of all carnivores throughout the universe and the ordering of the rest of the species under K'kree rule.

Disavowed by the supreme rulers of Kirur (the K'kree capital), the Lords of Thunder have embarked on the conquest of an empire of their own. A large volume of space in the Luretir!girr Sector, including the former Renkard Union, has been taken over by Trexkaxaar'keer!, an empire ruled by K'kree clans under the domination of a Xaar'keer! warlord called Kaxk. Humans refer to this empire — somewhat inaccurately — as the Xuruk Empire.

The Lords of Thunder have recently learned that the G'naak of K'kree legend — a species regarded by many as purely mythical — are to be found on a world somewhere within Gateway Sector. Within the collection of artifacts in their *xagha,* they possess numerous relics relating to the G'naak. Among these was the so-called *Tablet of the Dawn* stolen by the human, *Enli Visirichurva.* Various of these artifacts have provided clues which they intend to use to help them locate the G'naak of K'kree folklore, and destroy them.

By destroying the homeworld of the dreaded G'naak, Kaxk believes he would gain tremendous leverage with the Krurruna of Kirur, enough, perhaps, that he could return to Kirur in triumph and make himself *Ghik'keer!k'ak T't'tkahk Xeng Kirr,* Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds.

• **Tablet of the Dawn:** An artifact. A relic of great age originally belonging to the the *Xaar'keer!,* it was stolen by *Enli Visirichurva* from a K'kree *xagha,* or "temple camp", on Xabthar. Agents of the Xaar'keer! have been searching for the relic ever since and will do anything to effect its recovery.

It is a rectangular piece of concrete-like stone inscribed with archaic K'kree ideographs, carried inside a small trunk by

Visirichurva. Originally an inscription on the side of a public building or monument, it has become a kind of trophy carried by K'kree military forces of the Lords of Thunder. Only *Dr. James Garwood* of the Gateway Xenoarchaeological Foundation on Gateway will be able to decipher it.

Though the inscription is fragmentary and any translation will be incomplete, the tablet contains several specific clues. It mentions a time long ago when a second moon appeared in the skies over Kirur, the K'kree homeworld. It describes invaders — probably the legendary "G'naak" — as having scales and six limbs. It tells how the second moon eventually vanished toward a particular part of Kirur's night sky. An astronomical program run by the Gateway Foundation will prove that the Gateway Sector happens to lie in the same direction as seen from Kirur.

The inscription will reveal to the characters that the G'naak of K'kree legend *could* have travelled to some world within the Gateway Sector and will provide circumstantial evidence linking the G'naak of legend to the six-limbed pseudoreptilians known as Droashav. It suggests that the Droashav spacecraft was a "moon," which could lead the characters to suspect the asteroid moon that circles Trevannic in a highly elliptical orbit once they begin researching that world.

Finally, the tablet will prove that the K'kree are extremely interested in the tablet as they dispatch human assassins to kill Visirichurva and recover it, and later pursue the player characters across the sector. The K'kree merchant Grek will show a great deal of interest in recovering the tablet for his people and, eventually, will manage to steal it, either from the characters or from the Foundation on Gateway.

LAUNCHING THE CAMPAIGN

Lords of Thunder is intended as source material for several complete campaigns all set within the Gateway Sector. The referee will want to begin with an adventure that propels the player characters (PCs) into the story and also introduces them to places and NPCs which will be important later.

Obviously, the type of adventure the referee presents will depend in part on the types of characters involved in the game. Below are several ideas which could serve as introductory adventures in the Gateway Sector. The referee can choose one which seems appropriate for the players in her group.

Several of these plots might be woven together into a single adventure, or the referee can save them as situations to spring on the players at a later time.

Running Guns for Fun and Profit

The adventurers arrive at Gateway, sell the Katastrian wode pods and javva fiber in their ship's hold, and begin searching for a new cargo that will bring them a large profit. After several days of fruitless inquiries at Grand Port, they are approached by Tora Takanabe, a representative of Jollynnstar Enterprises.

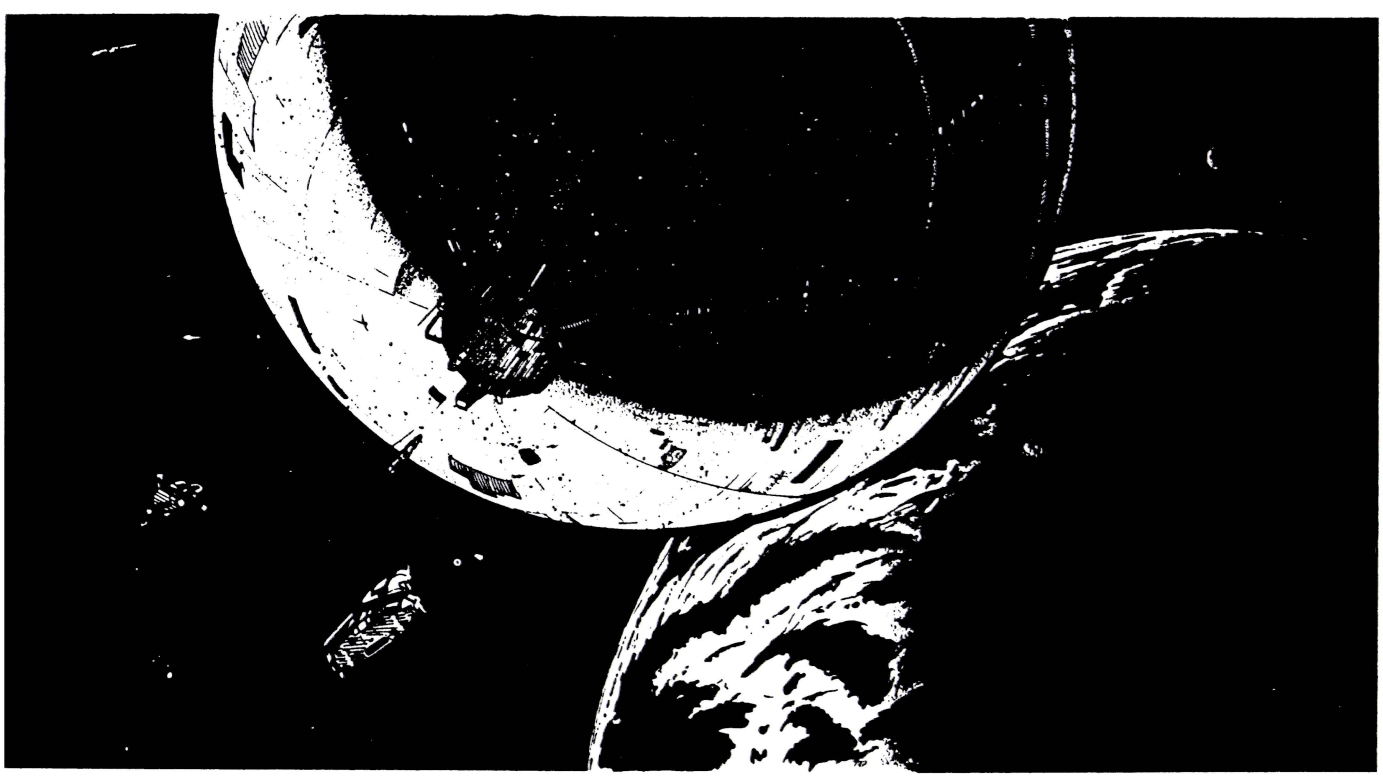
Takanabe has a cargo, but the run does carry a measure of risk. The situation in Megusard is growing serious. The Sardis High Council has rejected K'kree demands, and there are rumors that K'kree ground forces have already landed at Kolan, only a Jump-2 from Sardis itself. The cargo is weapons, eighty tons of them packed in plastane cases. Though there is no detailed manifest, inspection of the crates will reveal gauss rifles, plasma rifles, fusion guns, TL-13 battle armor, and TL-14 grav belts.

The destination for the weapons is Kolan (2831), in the Megusard Corporate. The K'kree have been threatening Megusard for the past year, demanding trade and diplomatic concessions which will, in effect, make Megusard a vassal of the powerful empire of Trexkaxaar'keer!, (also called the Xuruk Empire), a K'kree offshoot in a neighboring sector which has already taken over the Renkard Union. Takanabe will pay the adventurers a flat fee of Cr100,000, plus all fuel and port expenses, for delivering the weapons to Star Marshal Adam Lee at Sardis, capital of Megusard, and then proceeding with Lee to nearby Kolan.

The trip itself will go relatively smoothly, though the referee should introduce one or more pirate encounters along the way. The subsectors of Castra, Forcett, Ashton, and Riftin have a justifiably notorious reputation as being havens for various pirate bands, especially the band known as the Castran Marauders. The referee may, if she wishes, interrupt the voyage by having the characters and their ship captured by the Marauders. However, they should manage to either escape or join forces with the pirate commander Raynan Tal, and to proceed on their way to Sardis.

Once at Sardis, however, they find that "Star Marshal" Adam Lee is in fact a former ship captain working for Renkard Grand Admiral Hugo Vandamien. The weapons are for a covert army of Renkard expatriates called Force Bravo training at Kolan in preparation for a private invasion of their occupied homeworlds.

Unfortunately, the Megusard government wants to placate the K'kree masters of the former Renkard Union. Aware through their agents that the characters' ship has weapons on board, they will move to seize the vessel in order to avoid further angering the K'kree. Any attempt to transfer funds to the player



characters (i.e., their Cr100,000) will be blocked by the Megusard government.

If the player characters do nothing, their ship, money, and cargo will be seized by security forces on Sardis and they will be arrested for smuggling. With help from Lee and Vandamien, however, they can flee the capital and make their way to Kolan. They will have to run a blockade of Megusard system defense forces to reach the Renkard base on the planet.

Once they have joined Force Bravo, they can transfer the weapons and receive payment. They will also be offered a new job . . . smuggling the same weapons from Kolan to Akabar, a Renkard world only a Jump-2 beyond Kolan. Adam Lee will go along as guide and contact. If they can deliver the weapons to human resistance forces on Akabar, they will be paid an additional Cr1,500,000 upon their return to Kolan.

Of course, the players won't learn about the K'kree battlefleet which is occupying the Akabar system until they get there! They will have to run the blockade and perform a daring, high-speed atmospheric entry to avoid pursuing system defense boats. Once down, they will be able to turn the weapons over to guerrilla forces hiding in Akabar's equatorial jungles.

Then all they have to do is get out again!

Referees with a particularly fiendish sense of humor may wish to have a K'kree battlefleet show up in Kolan either before or after the Akabar Run.

Referee's Notes: This adventure is designed for players interested in pursuing a merchant-oriented adventure or one involving risky activities like smuggling.

The referee has several options for folding in other plot elements. The PCs can be captured by the Castran Marauders, introducing them to Raynan Tal and the Droashav. They can meet Enli Visirichurva at either Sardis or Kolan. He will be most eager to get out of Megusard space entirely and will pay the adventurers well for passage to Gateway.

Mercs For Hire

At Gateway, the PCs quickly identify the *Star Guard* as a bar frequented by mercenary and military types, a good place to pick up info on hot tickets. The word is that mercs are enjoying a seller's market just now. Things are heating up all over the sector, and the adventurers can pretty much choose their own ticket.

A perusal of the electronic posting board at the *Star Guard's* dimly lit entrance turns up the following leads:

Wanted: Men with military experience to train small, private strike force. Low risk. High pay. Inquire: Darvin Smith, Regis Hotel, Southport, Gateway.

Wanted: Soldiers with a yen for adventure. Archaeological team needs small, well-trained security force for protection from primitive autocthones on Freehold. Inquire: Gateway Xenoarchaeological Foundation, Level 98, Sector 12, Southport, Gateway.

The Heptad Needs You! Once again the hordes of the Hochiken Tyranny are threatening the peace of the Plavian League. Contact: Plavian League Embassy, Level 34, Sector 15, Northport, Gateway.

Wanted: Former military personnel with shipboard experience. Salurian Lines is now hiring qualified personnel to serve as on-board security forces. Luxurious quarters aboard Salurian's luxury liners. Top credits! Contact: Salurian Lines, the Yards, Gateway.

All of the posted tickets are legitimate, and each could lead the characters into a different adventure:

• **Darvin Smith:** Smith is a contact for the covert Renkard army known as Force Bravo now being assembled on Kolan, in the Megusard Corporate. He will offer the player characters Cr10,000 per month, plus transport and reasonable expenses if they will help train Force Bravo.

The characters will be subject to the legal hassles on Sardis described in the gunrunning scenario, and to arrest and imprisonment for associating with the Renkards. Once at Kolan, the characters may be induced to actually join the invasion of Akabar, or they may be trapped by the arrival of K'kree forces at Kolan.

During the proceedings, the characters will have the opportunity to meet Enli Visirichurva, who will hire them as bodyguards for his trip to Gateway.

• **GXF Archaeological Team:** The team, operating aboard the explorer ship *Lucian Keynes* is under the auspices of the Gateway Xenoarchaeological Foundation. The ruins of an extinct civilization on Gravin (2424) have attracted considerable interest, and an expedition has been organized to conduct a preliminary excavation. The natives mentioned in the ad are stone age, easily frightened off, and will pose no danger.

At some point in the excavation, however, the encampment will be attacked by a ship belonging to the Castran Marauders. The pirates will land, seize the Foundation ship and equipment, and threaten to maroon or kill the archaeological party.

If captured, the player characters may be offered a chance to join the Marauders, given they put up a good fight. After a trial period, they will have the opportunity of meeting Raynan Tal, who will be looking for people to take with him to Kolan on a gunrunning operation.

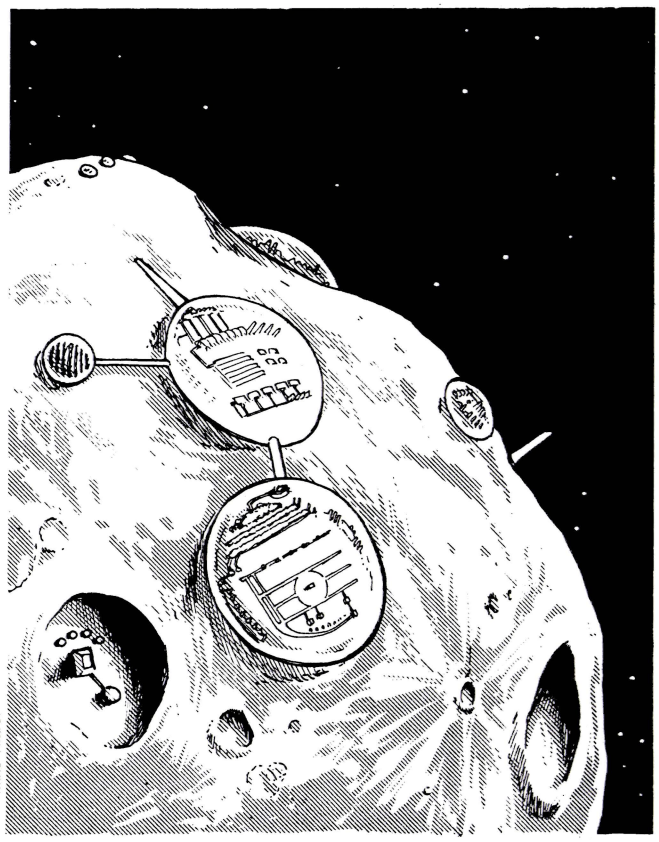
Of course, the characters might put up such a good fight they defeat the pirate attackers. In this case, they may learn about Raynan Tal from a prisoner. And Tal will certainly be interested in them.

This scenario could also introduce the characters to Dr. Jamis Garwood of the GXF. Enli Visirichurva may eventually seek the characters out because he has heard they've met Garwood.

• **Plavian League Embassy:** While legitimate, this ticket is basically a dead end. The characters will be offered Cr1,000 per month to serve with planetary security forces on one of the worlds of the Plavian Heptad. Vosrin (1512) is a water world; its single large city was badly damaged in a Hochiken raid, and mercenaries are being hired to keep the peace and prevent looting while an evacuation is carried out. After a time, the characters may pick up on one of the other mercenary opportunities, using their Vosrin experience as a reference.

• **Salurian Lines:** The characters are hired as shipboard marines to provide security on board a Type M Subsidized Liner, the Gateway Star. Pay is Cr1500 per month and the duty is boring as the ship makes a passenger and freight run from Gateway to Sardis and back.

Several options are possible. The Gateway Star can be attacked and boarded by pirates, in which case the outcome will


Mike Vilardi

be the same as for the Archaeological team ticket above. Another possibility is that they will be paid off at Sardis, where they will meet either Adam Lee or Enli Visirichurva.

Referee's Notes on Ad Postings: These scenarios call for either mercenary player characters or freewheeling, do-anything-for-a-credit characters with military experience. For these scenarios the group does not have their own ship.

If the PCs do have a ship, the referee might arrange to temporarily relieve them of it. A bad docking at the Yards in Gateway, one resulting in damage to port equipment which leads to the seizure of the vessel, is one good way to separate the players from their ship. The characters must then raise money on one or more of the scenarios listed above in order to pay the damage and recover their vessel later.

Still another approach is for the patron to hire the characters and their ship, usually for an additional Cr10,000 per week plus fuel and docking fees. Darvin Smith wants them to carry weapons to Kolan (see the gunrunning scenario above); the archaeologists need to hire a ship as well as security forces; or the Plavians need a ship to transport certain wealthy refugees from Vosrin to Bremen.

Finally, Salurian lines might hire the adventurers and their ship to serve as a long-range escort for the Gateway Star, explaining that pirate activity in the Sector is on the increase, but the threat of war has reduced the number of military convoy escorts available. The characters would follow the Star in hopes of surprising pirate vessels that attacked the liner en route. The characters would be subject to extremely thorough security checks for this one, however, since the company's people would be worried about the possibility of the pirate hunters turning pirate themselves. Such a scenario would be likely only if the characters had already proven themselves for Salurian Lines on other missions.

Operation Nova

At the Star Guard one evening, the characters are approached by a man who introduces himself as Vincent Ravenby. He shows them Tartheniancorp credentials which identify him as a force leader for Gateway's private security forces, the TCs.

Some research by the characters (using Computer skills to access Gateway Security computer records, or by using Streetwise skills with various casual encounters at the Star Guard and elsewhere) will reveal that Ravenby is actually an agent of the Gateway Stellar Intelligence, the GSI.

Gateway has a deep and abiding interest in piracy in the sector. Research into the history of Gateway and the Galian League should tell the characters why. The player characters, as newcomers to the sector (hence, unknown by the locals) and with extensive military backgrounds, would be ideal recruits for a GSI covert op called Operation Nova.

Ravenby wants the characters to attempt to infiltrate the notorious pirate band known as the Castran Marauders. Largest and most dangerous of several bands operating in the sector, the Marauders are based somewhere in the area known as the Four Subsectors; exactly where is unknown.

Contacting the Marauders will be difficult but not impossible. The characters can encounter the pirates as victims — as in several of the scenarios already presented — convincing them (usually by their skill in combat) that they would be useful recruits.

A less risky way of joining the Marauders would be to travel to Carlton, the freewheeling capital of the Swanfei Free Worlds . . . a virtual pirate kingdom in the Forcett and Riftin subsectors. Still another way would be to engage in one or more gunrunning operations to Kolan in the Megusard Corporate, in hopes of attracting the attention of pirates who have been engaged in similar operations lately.

The characters will be expected to prove themselves — by personal combat with other Marauders and by joining in on raids against military and civilian targets. Two possible targets are the Salurian Lines' Gateway Star, and the archaeological team on Gravin, both described above.

Player characters interested in remaining good guys while pretending to be bad guys may be given the opportunity of saving civilian lives (e.g., successfully arguing that the archaeologists on Gravin can be marooned rather than killed). The referee could also set one or both of these targets up as a GSI ploy, allowing the characters to peddle information about them as currency to buy their acceptance by the pirates.

Still another way of getting in with the pirates would be to carry out the merc gunrunning scenario. Here, the adventurers will find themselves working with the pirates, though not joining them. An offer to join the Marauders might arise if the players proved themselves cunning, brave, or lucky.

Once they are accepted by the Castran Marauders, the characters will have the opportunity of meeting Raynan Tal. This meeting will lead to further adventures in Megusard space.

Their goal will be to learn the location of the Castran Marauder's secret bases. There are three of them, all well-hidden and heavily fortified. Their location and other information is discussed elsewhere in this campaign. (see: *Referee's Information: The Pirate Bases.)* The discovery of one world in particular will be important to the resolution of the major campaign.

When they learn what they need to know, the characters must contrive to pass the information on to GSI agents at Carlton, Sardis, or Tavarand. The data will be transferred at an arranged drop and used by government authorities to mount a major raid by a joint Plavian-Galian naval task force out of Bremen.

Of course, there is considerable danger that the characters will be caught by the pirates while spying or that they will find themselves at one of the bases when the task force arrives and begins its bombardment.

Referee's Notes: This scenario is suitable for mercenary or adventurer characters with military experience. It should appeal to players who enjoy plots involving intrigue and covert missions or to players who would like to join a pirate band without the onus of actually being pirates.

If they do not have a ship, transport will be provided to Sardis, where the characters can book commercial passage to Carlton. If they do have a ship, it can either be stored at the GSI's expense on Gateway, or they can use it to travel directly to Carlton, where they seek to join the Marauders, ship and all.

Exploring Worlds for Fun and Profit

The characters are hired by the Gateway Survey Service to explore one or more worlds of which little is known. A xenoarchaeological expedition to the world called Gravin, mounted by the GXF, is being planned, and the characters are asked to survey the planet as part of the expedition.

The GXF expedition to Gravin can, at the referee's discretion, result in the capture of the characters by Castran Marauders, who will take them to Trevannic. Alternatively, a Foundation expedition to Trevannic could be mounted, resulting in the almost immediate capture of the characters by pirates based in the system.

Ideally, characters interested in exploring worlds should be allowed to visit several worlds before they meet pirate forces. Numerous planets have only been lightly explored in the Sector's history and are virtually unknown. A few of these are listed in the section *Gateway Systems* and can be developed more completely by the referee.

Along the way, the characters should be given an opportunity to pick up clues regarding the K'kree. Possibly, they meet Enli Visirichurva along the way or are asked by Dr. Garwood during a between-explorations visit to Gateway to locate this NPC. Ultimately, the exploration portion of the campaign can be folded into the main story plot, as the characters learn of Trevannic, the Droashav, and K'kree interest in an artifact called the *Tablet of Dawn.*

Referee's Notes: This approach is suitable for characters with scout backgrounds, and for players with an interest in exploring new worlds. It is especially good for players more interested in surveying and exploring alien worlds than in gun battles and intrigue. It should, however, gently lead the players into the intrigue as they learn of Trevannic, the Tablet of the Dawn, and the K'kree threat to human space.

The Direct Approach: A Patron

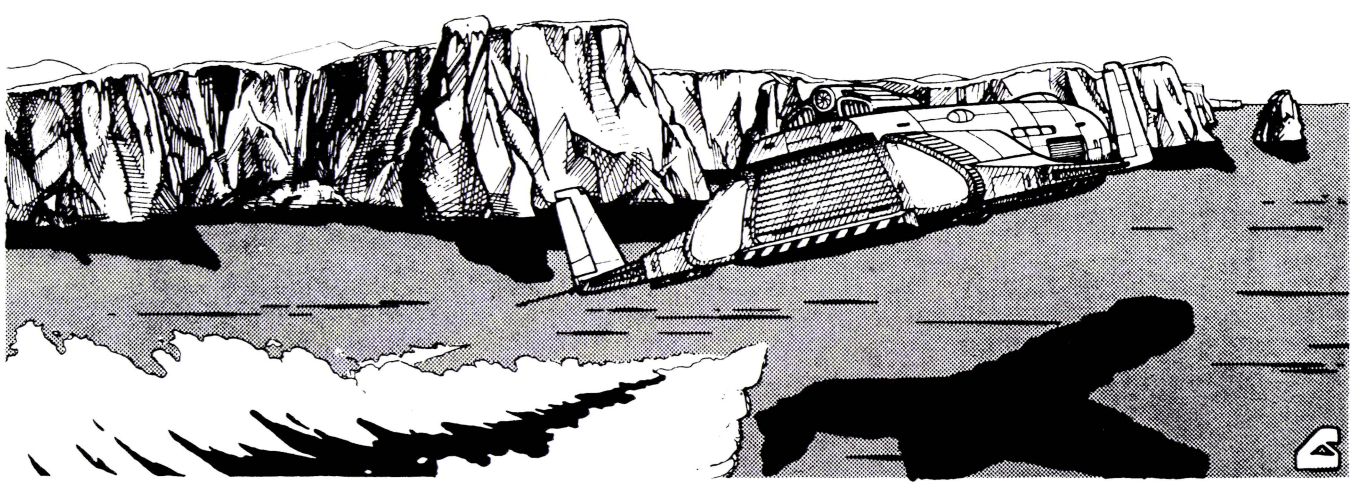
Finally, the characters can be directly approached by Dr. Garwood of the Gateway Xenoarchaeological Foundation. Word has reached him from Sardis that an individual who has worked for the Foundation on a freelance basis in the past has acquired an artifact of great archaeological value, and he needs someone to go and bring the man and his find to Gateway.

The individual is, of course, Enli Visirichurva, who has approached a GXF office on Sardis in an attempt to sell his discovery. The Foundation personnel have neither money nor authority to make such a purchase directly but have sent a message to Garwood which has piqued his interest.

If the characters have their own ship, the GXF will charter the vessel to make the passage to Sardis and back. If they do not have a ship, the Foundation will book passage for them aboard the *Gateway Star* and will pay them to travel to Sardis, contact Visirichurva, and escort him and his find safely back to Gateway.

And of course, all the problems with pirates and political intrigue described in the various scenarios above can still come to pass.

Referee's Notes: This approach is suitable for any group of Traveller adventurers and may be used by players who do not care to get involved in piracy or major, military-oriented campaigns. There will be more than enough excitement for them in avoiding the K'kree agents who are pursuing Visirichurva.



NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

LORDS OF THUNDER

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

The following non-player characters may be encountered during the course of a campaign in Gateway Sector.

Dr. Jamis Feshna Garwood
487FCB Age 67 12 terms Cr300,000
Administrator-4, Leader-3, Computer-3, Linguistics (K'kree)-3, History (K'kree)-3, Electronics-2, Interview-2, Robotics-2, J-O-T-2, Medical-1

A fellow of the Solaris Xenoarchaeological Institute at Hasheenta, with doctorates from both Alshavrinti University and Cambridge, Dr. Garwood may be the preeminent human authority on K'kree archaeology, languages, and culture. He was a member of the Savrundin Expedition of 1112, only the second human archaeological expedition ever permitted to carry out a survey and a preliminary field dig on the surface of Kirur itself. He is currently Senior Professor of K'kree Studies at the Gateway Xenoarchaeological Foundation, Gateway.

Dr. Garwood is totally dedicated to his work. Possessed of great sympathy to the K'kree world view, he is by choice a strict vegetarian. He is also one of the relatively few humans who have mastered *Ikee*, the principal K'kree dialect.

Garwood has chosen to settle for the time being at Gateway for two main reasons. First of all, Gateway Sector offers a relative haven from the chaos and destruction of the Rebellion.

Garwood is a native of Aldebaran, in the Solomani Confederation, and as such has been treated with suspicion and even hostility during his travels within the Imperium. Since the Rebellion broke out in 1115, he has found it increasingly difficult to work or to travel without interference by one or another of the splinter governments of the Imperium. Perhaps for this reason, Garwood is something of a pacifist. "All military posturing," as he puts it, "repels me."

Second, Gateway offers a convenient staging base for future expeditions in K'kree space. He has been in contact with K'kree trade delegation personnel at Gateway in hopes of organizing another visit to Kirur.

Enli Visirichurva
9798A7 Age 43 6 terms Cr500
History (Gateway Sector)-3, Brawling-3, Survival-3, Stealth-2, Archaic Weapons-2, Auto Pistol-2, Laser Rifle-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Computer-1, Vacc Suit-1

Though he calls himself an archaeologist, Visirichurva might better be described as an adventurer . . . and a treasure hunter. He makes his living by recovering alien antiquities and selling them to museums and historical foundations. Unfortunately, he is more interested in recovering the artifacts for the sale than in learning what they tell about the cultures that made them.

Visirichurva was once arrested on Haro for breaking into a Durendeth burial vault and destroying the mummified heads —

he was trying to recover the platinum *javarro* buried with them. On Plinth he was barred from ever returning to that world after his explorations triggered a Guomon booby trap which blocked the entrance to the 6000-year-old tomb city with a landslide. He is still wanted by local authorities for that incident.

He considers himself to be a professional archaeologist, maligned and ignored by his peers, and hounded by the bureaucratic authorities of the worlds he visits. He is, in fact, little more than a mercenary adventurer, always broke, and always looking for the Big Find that will make him wealthy and respected.

The characters will encounter Visirichurva as he seeks passage with them to Gateway. Currently employed by the Xenoarchaeological Foundation on Gateway, he has made an important find and needs to return it to Dr. Garwood. He is desperate, believing that someone is pursuing him, and he will be anxious for the safety of a small wooden trunk which he keeps locked in a vault or in his possession at all times.

Referee's Information: Visirichurva stole the tablet from K'kree authorities on Xabthar, in the Renkard Union. He knows that it is valuable but does not know for certain what it is. He hopes to have Garwood translate the inscription so that he can decide how best to dispose of it. Possibly the Foundation will purchase it. Other possibilities include selling it to human antiquarians, or contacting the K'kree and holding it for ransom.

Mari Orlso Jollynn, CEO Jollynnstar Enterprises
76699A Age 54 9 terms Cr50,000,000
Administration-4, Bribery-2, Leader-2, Persuasion-2, Auto Pistol-2

Depending on who you talk to, Jollynn is either a singularly prosperous interstellar trader or a bloodthirsty vixen of a pirate. Living on Gateway, where she runs Jollynnstar Enterprises, Jollynn is fabulously wealthy and a figure of considerable political importance throughout much of the Galian Federation.

It is rumored, however, that Jollynn made her fortune with a pirate band operating in and near the Trevannic system. While she will neither confirm nor deny the charges, it is a fact that she is escorted everywhere by two fang-jawed Trevannians, the six-limbed, pseudoreptilian sentients which call themselves Droashav.

Jollynn may hire the adventurers to ferry a special cargo to the Megusard Corporate.

Tora Takanabe, Jollynnstar Executive (and spy)
897A97 Age 38 5 terms Cr10,000
Administration-2, Bribery-2, Forgery-2, Broker-2, Computer-2, Auto Pistol-2, Pilot-1, Grav Vehicle-1

A high-ranking executive with Jollynnstar Enterprises, he will make the first contact with the characters, offering them Cr100,000 plus fuel and docking fees to ferry a consignment of weapons to the Megusard Corporate.

Takanabe is also secretly on the payroll of the Gateway Stellar Intelligence. The GSI suspects that Jollynnstar may be helping the Castran Marauders somehow. Takanabe has been informing on Jollynn for several months now, without positive results. Takanabe could approach the adventurers later in the campaign and enlist their help in infiltrating the pirate organization.

Raynan Tal

899A96 Age 38 5 terms Cr100,000

Pilot-2, Administration-2, Leader-2, Persuasion-2, Auto Pistol-2, Vacc Suit-2, Grav Vehicle-1

Tal is one of the principal leaders of the far-flung pirate band which calls itself the Castran Marauders. Tall, powerful, and possessing a vicious streak and a quick temper, he commands the respect of thousands of corsairs on worlds and ships across the Four Subsectors.

He has his own ship, an 800-ton Broadsword-class mercenary cruiser called the *Vengeance*. The ship has a cargo capacity of 80-tons, has a crew of 8 and carries a complement of 42 pirate raiders. The *Vengeance*, the flagship of a small fleet of military vessels and heavily-armed merchantmen operating within the Castran subsector, is currently docked at Smith's Ego, within Varan's Belt.

Tal began his career as a smuggler and still engages in the practice when it seems profitable. He owns a half interest in a 200-ton free trader, *Commercial Enterprise*, which is home ported at Gandry, in the Sandhaven Belt. On numerous occasions he has run the *Enterprise* into the Megusard Corporate or the Plavian League with illegal or highly taxed cargos and reaped a generous profit.

While Tal cannot be said to be the Castran Marauders' leader — the pirate band is too large, dispersed, and non-centrally organized for any one man to command all of its members — he is certainly one of its most powerful and influential leaders. He is the wealthiest man on Gandry, owning an "estate" on that minor world consisting of three bubble domes and the population of a large town. The government of Gandry — and, many believe, that of the entire Sandhaven Belt — largely defers to Tal's wishes, and the Gandrian governor, the planet's representatives on the Sandhaven Council, and the admiral commanding the system's small defense force are all on his payroll.

The player characters may meet Raynan Tal if their party is accosted by a Marauder band on Gravin or during an attack on a liner on the Gateway-Sardis Run. They may also meet him while investigating pirate activities (or while attempting to join the Marauders) on Carlton, Gandry, or other systems of the Swanfei Independency. Like Mari Jollynn on Gateway, he has a personal bodyguard of Droashav mercenaries. . . usually four of them.

In recent weeks, Tal has learned that the K'kree are looking for a human who stole something important from them. He has begun putting out feelers of his own. If he could do the K'kree a favor, he might be able to do profitable business with them someday.

Meanwhile he has been turning much of his attention toward the lucrative gunrunning trade, smuggling weapons from Swanfei into Megusard, where his clients, Force Bravo, have been stockpiling equipment for their coming return to Renkard. Tal views these preparations with considerable amusement. From his point of view, Force Bravo doesn't have a chance, but he's willing to make as much money off the poor geeks as he can before they finally bite off more than they can chew.

Xkluur'gh'grek

AA7A9A Age 50 5 terms Cr500,000

Administration-4, Linguistics (Galanglic)-3, Enclosure-3, Broker-3, Intrusion-2, Pilot-2, Close Combat-2, Polearm-2, Interrogation-2

Known as "Grek" by humans, this K'kree is present at Gateway as part of the K'kree trade delegation. The characters may encounter him when he attempts to buy the Tablet of the Dawn from them, or he could be introduced by Dr. Garwood. He could be a useful source of information on K'kree language, customs, culture, and history.

Though he claims to hate the offshoot K'kree empire of Kaxk, he is in fact a spy for their organization (the Lords of Thunder) and is present on Gateway in order to gather information which will lead them to Trevannic. At some point during the course of the adventure, Grek will secure the information he needs from Gateway's computer library, steal the Tablet of the Dawn (either from the characters or from the safe of the Xenoarchaeological Foundation) and flee to Xabthar in his ship.

Though accompanied on most occasions by 2D6+4 wives, servants, and others, Grek is capable of working alone for extended periods. He also works well with humans and will have several human thugs available to help him when he breaks into Foundation spaces.

Referee's Note: In the last century, unknown to those outside the Two Thousand Worlds (and many within the K'kree empire as well), certain K'kree geneticists have bred a special sub-caste of K'kree. This new subcaste can stand being alone for extended periods (up to a day), and can endure tight quarters (for a K'kree) without going insane. Grek is one of these new breed of K'kree. In all other ways, Grek is very much K'kree.

Kaxk'kaguraa'khan

CC4ACC Age 56 6 terms (Cr unlimited)

Leader-4, Administration-4, Laser Rifle-3, Vacc Suit-3, Linguistics (Galanglic)-2, Persuasion-2, Close Combat-2, Polearm-2, Survival-2, Ship's Boat-2, Auto Pistol-2, Enclosure-1

A powerful K'kree *Ghir'ghik'keerlk*, or Overlord of lords. His name translates as "Bearer of the appointed proper order of reason," and he is supreme lord of an independent offshoot of the Two Thousand Worlds located in the Gateway and Luretir!girr Sectors. Humans within his domain have shortened his name to Kaxk, which means, approximately, "Bearer." He is currently on

Silest, capital of the former Renkard Union.

Although the player characters will probably not meet Kaxk face to face, they will certainly encounter his agents, human and K'kree, who are moving throughout Gateway Sector in an attempt to locate the rumored homeworld of the G'naak of K'kree legend. They are likely to encounter him at the end of the adventure, when a stand-off with a K'kree battlefleet occurs. His flagship is a K'kree battleship with a name that translates the same as the K'kree term for "army": Killer of Vermin.

Kaxk is always accompanied by 2D6+10 wives, servants, warriors, and other family companions.

Trom Vendir

999A66 Age 34 4 terms Cr150,000

Rifle-4, Laser Rifle-4, J-O-T-3, Blade-3, Melee-3, Bribery-2, Pilot-2, Auto Pistol-2, Grav Vehicle-1

Human killer-for-hire. A native of Silest in the former Renkard Union, Vendir was a deserter from Renkard's army who now serves the Union's new masters with enthusiasm. He has been paid a large sum by the K'kree, in platinum, to track down Enli Visirichurva and recover the Tablet of the Dawn. If he recovers the tablet and returns it to Silest, he will become a very wealthy man indeed.

The player characters will encounter Vendir or his thugs at some point after they have met Visirichurva. At some point when one or more of the player characters are not accompanied by Visirichurva, Vendir will approach them, representing himself as a local law enforcement officer. He will convincingly explain that Visirichurva has stolen a certain valuable artifact, and will attempt to enlist the player characters' help in recovering it. He will even offer a Cr5,000 reward for their help in apprehending this wanted criminal.

Of course, the players may decide this is a good deal and help Vendir, in which case the K'kree will recover the tablet and this part of the campaign, at least, is over.

Thoughtful player characters will check with local law enforcement agencies and learn that Trom Vendir is, in fact, not a policeman. His ship, *Swiftgold*, is listed as being in one of the Starport Docks, and travel records indicate that Vendir has came from the Renkard Union. Further checking will reveal that Vendir has attracted attention on several worlds in the past, claiming to be a local policeman and asking questions about Enli Visirichurva, his trunk, and a stolen artifact of some kind.

The exact course of events is up to the Referee, but he will either try to kill Visirichurva (either by himself or through local muscle hired for the job) and, in the end, he will be successful. He will then begin following the characters who will have to deal with him if they are to survive. If the characters are unable to kill him along the way, he may show up as an accomplice of the K'kree spy Grek.

Though he is little more than a cheap thug, Vendir has considerable wealth and backing. Through bribery and influence, he can access starport records and learn the player characters' destination after they leave a world. He has been given a Type S Scout by his masters and will follow the characters wherever they carry Visirichurva and his trunk.

Typical Thug (Trom Vendir)

777777 Age 30 3 terms Cr—

Brawling-2, Carousing-2, Auto Pistol-2, Blade-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Gambling-1

These are the stats for a typical thug in Trom Vendir's employ. He has hired the gutter sweepings of a dozen starports as hitmen, muscle, and informants in his search for *Enli* Visirichurva.

Once the player characters have met Visirichurva, an encounter with 1D6 thugs in a public place (the street, a spaceport bar, the port concourse) is always a possibility. They will attempt to kill or capture Visirichurva and steal the trunk. If Visirichurva does not have the trunk with him, they will either simultaneously attempt a break-in wherever the trunk is hidden (aboard the character's starship, for example) or attempt to capture Visirichurva in order to force him to tell them where it is.

Once Visirichurva is dead and the player characters have possession of the trunk, Vendir and his thugs will transfer their attention to them.

Droashav Mercenary

AC8666 Age 26 2 terms Cr—

Blade-4, Melee-3, Polearm-2 , Blade-2, Rifle-2

Both Mari Jollynn and Raynan Tal have Droashav bodyguards — large, imposing carnivores guaranteed to frighten off any casual attacker. The player characters may also encounter Droashav mercenaries in the service of the Castran Marauders, or on their homeworld of Trevannic.

Standing approximately the same height as a human, but with a slightly stooped posture, they are upright, bipedal beings with two sets of powerful arms. Their feet are equipped with wickedly curved, 10-cm claws. In any close fighting, these claws are considered to be blades which the Droashav can wield with a skill of 4.

Their scaly armor is treated as jack.

Vincent Ravenby

699A9A Age 50 8 terms Cr100,000

J-O-T-3, Recon-3, Stealth-3, Pilot-2, Leader-2, Linguistics (K'kree)-2, Persuasion-2, Auto Pistol-2, Vacc Suit-1, Grav Vehicle-1

Special agent for Gateway Stellar Intelligence (GSI). He carries credentials identifying him as a force leader for Tartheniancorp, Gateway's private security organization. Ravenby is the director of Operation Nova, a far-flung, covert op directed against organized piracy throughout Gateway Sector. Nova's particular target is the pirate band known as the Castran Marauders.

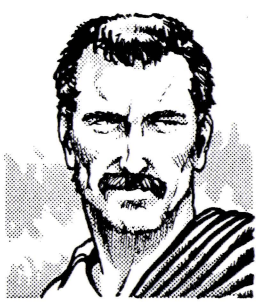
Ravenby does not *look* like a secret agent, which is one reason he has survived as long as he

has. In his fifties, with graying hair and a befuddled manner, he looks more like a university professor, or the owner of a small antique shop — all covers he has used successfully in the past. He has numerous intelligence contacts on Gateway, Carlton, Bremen, Tavarand, and Sardis, mostly GSI agents and freelancers who report directly to him. He is seeking information on the location of several marauder bases in the Castra subsector and will pay well for such information.

He may approach the characters while they are looking for employment on Gateway or Sardis, offering them money if they will infiltrate the Marauders in order to learn the location of their bases. He may also be a chance encounter on any of the above-named worlds, or a passenger buying passage either on the characters' own ship or aboard the subsidized liner *Gateway Star.*

Ravenby possesses information the characters may find useful, including possible mercenary tickets (see *Mercs For Hire,* under *Campaign Plots),* historical and political background information on the K'kree crisis in Megusard, and extensive information on the Castran Marauders.

Darvin Smith (alias)
A99985 Age 38 5 terms Cr20,000
Leader-3, Persuasion-2, Auto Pistol-2, Battle Dress-2, Grav Vehicle-1, Tracked Vehicle-1



One of thousands of expatriate soldiers, adventurers, and refugees driven from the Renkard Union by the K'kree takeover there. He is the public spokesman and recruitment officer for Force Bravo, the covert Renkard army being assembled and trained at Kolan. He is on Gateway recruiting mercenaries and buying weapons.

The characters may encounter Smith as a potential client when he offers them top credit to run eighty tons of cargo to Sardis and deliver them to Force Bravo agents there. He may also recruit the characters directly as mercenaries, hiring them to train Force Bravo on Kolan.

At the referee's discretion, Smith (*not* his real name) will accompany the characters to Megusard. He will be a useful source of information about the K'kree takeover of the Renkard Union, background on Megusard, and general information about piracy in the sector.

Adam Lee
859A97 Age 42 6 terms Cr50,000
Pilot-3, Navigation-3, Sensor Ops-2, Administration-2, Leader-2, Persuasion-2, Auto Pistol-2, Vacc Suit-2

Another Renkard expatriate, Lee is a freedom fighter utterly devoted to the overthrow of Renkard's K'kree masters. Once captain of the *Thurian,* a battleship of the Renkard Navy, he carried Grand Admiral Vandamien to safety after the debacle at Xabthar in 1106.

Lee — who may rather grandiloquently masquerade as Grand Admiral Lee — will be the designated recipient of arms smuggled to Force Bravo from Gateway. He also has extensive contacts with the Castran Marauders, with whom he has done business in the past. In particular, he knows Raynan Tal, who has smuggled weapons for Force Bravo and is building a stockpile of captured equipment and military supplies at Carlton.

He is devoted to Admiral Vandamien and reacts violently to suggestions that it was Vandamien's stupidity (or cupidity) that lost the battle of Xabthar.

Grand Admiral Hugo Vandamien
436A98 Age 58 10 terms Cr10,000
Computer-3, Tactic-3, Leader-3, Pilot-2, Interview-2, Sensor Ops-2, Administration-2, Persuasion-2, Auto Pistol-2, Vacc Suit-2, Grav Vehicle-1, Medic-1, Zero-G Environ-1

Renkard military officer and political leader now living on Sardis. Supreme commander of the Renkard First Fleet, he attacked a superior K'kree battlefleet at Xabthar in 1106, hoping to disrupt them before they could reach nearby Silest.

Unfortunately, the attack was badly handled — whether Vandamien's strategy was at fault has never been satisfactorily resolved — and Xabthar was a crushing defeat from which the Renkard Union never recovered. K'kree forces under Kaxk brought the entire Union under the suzerainty of clan *Ktiir!t'krik.* Admiral Vandamien, together with remnants of his fleet and those ground forces which could be evacuated in time, fled to Kolan in the neighboring principality of Megusard, where he has spent the years since organizing Force Bravo.

Vandamien presents the picture of an old man broken by misfortune, gray-haired, pale, and ill, but he still shows an iron will, an indomitable spirit, and an absolute refusal to surrender whatever the cost. He has spent most of his private fortune buying arms and equipment for Force Bravo, with which he expects to return in triumph to Silest soon. His agitations and plottings have made him something of an embarrassment to his hosts in the Megusard government at Sardis. While they offered him asylum from the K'kree originally, they are now attempting to reach an understanding with Kaxk, and Clan *Ktiir!t'krik* has issued a demand for his surrender — which must be met before further negotiations are carried out.

Murfo-the-Mouth
899A96 Age 38 5 terms Cr1,000
Streetwise-3, Broker-3, Dagger-2, Bribery-2, Stealth-2, Lockpick-2, Persuasion-2, Auto Pistol-1, Wheeled Vehicle-1, Forgery-1, Intrusion-1

Small time swindler and con artist. He may be encountered on Carlton or any of the other worlds of Swanfei where the characters are working for the GSI.

Small, dark, appearing obsequious and eager to please, Murfo got his streetname by willing to deal in information for a price. In fact, he is a GSI agent. If the characters are working for the GSI, he may be assigned as their contact on Carlton or another of the pirate worlds.

Murfo's prime purpose to the referee is as a warning to the characters. At some point after the characters have made contact with Murfo, the referee should allow them to discover that Murfo was kidnapped and tortured to death by Raynan Tal as a warning. This will leave them wondering whether Tal is on to them . . . or whether Operation Nova has been compromised.

He may also be brought in as a source of rumor or information on the street and could be a contact for Enli Visirichurva or for Force Bravo.

GATEWAY

LORDS OF THUNDER: WORLDGUIDE

The PCs will begin their campaign on Gateway. If the referee presents them with an extended campaign involving several separate but interwoven adventures, they will probably find themselves returning to Gateway between each mission.

This section describes Gateway and its history.

GATEWAY

Following is an excerpt from Traveller's Guide Series: Gateway, by the Traveller's Aid Society Press, 3rd Edition, published on Capital/Core, 1104.

Gateway Prime (1220 AS62688-B)

An artificial world, and the capital of the Galian Federation. Construction was originally begun by the Galastrian Metals over 1300 years ago, in the year -224 Imperial. Almost five hundred years later, in 251 Imperial, the citizen-workers of the facility revolted, and the asteroid became an independent world named Gateway Station or, more commonly, Gateway.

In many ways, Gateway is a unique world, and those differences are manifest in the station's UWP code of AS62688-B. It has a class A starport, one of the finest and most complete in the Sector. A very small body (S in its UWP) with a diameter just over 200 kilometers, it nevertheless is listed as having a standard atmosphere and a 20% hydrosphere (the Equatorial Sea). Its population numbers over eight million (6 on the population UWP). Its government is listed as a civil service bureaucracy, it has a law level of 8, and its Tech Level of B is low-average stellar.

Gateway has a Trade Classification of Ri, or rich. Its principal natural resources are ferrous ores which are still mined from the original planetoid shell, and radioactive ores, crystals, and raw hydrocarbons mined from other sites within the system. Gateway's principal coin-in-trade today, however, is the facility of Gateway Station itself, as a starport, ship building center, recreational port, and corporate finance center. Most trading companies and major corporations have offices, brokers, or factors at Gateway, and the taxes and operating fees they pay provide more revenue than Gateway's own foreign trade.

Today, Gateway — often called Gateway Prime to distinguish it from the system which is also called Gateway — is the capital of the thriving Galian Federation and hub of a trade-route network which extends across much of sector. The recent rise in tensions between the various political entities occupying the sector has guaranteed Gateway's prosperity. It is likely that Gateway and the Galian Federation will continue to play a leading role in the economics and stability of the sector for a long time to come.

GATEWAY SYSTEM

The rest of Gateway System is unremarkable. The star, an orange K0V once called Thegisthil, is today commonly known simply as Theg. There are two gas giants, the superjovian Alpha, and the small, distant Beta. There are two extensive planetoid belts, one inside Gateway's orbit, the other between the orbits of Alpha and Beta.

The Gateway planetoid was, properly speaking, a member of the inner planetoid belt, though its orbit keeps it well clear of the main concentrations of planetoids. Most planetographers in fact catalogue it as an independent — albeit very small — world in its own right, rather than lumping it together with the planetoids of the Inner Belt.

HISTORY

In -243 Imperial, a mining survey vessel, the T.C.S. Hespharian, under contract to Galastrian Metals of Tharver, investigated a previously unexplored star system (Miller's Catalogue 0410-21185) in the newly-opened Windfleet Subsector. The star was named Thegisthil, a Nanisthi-Vilani word meaning "orange-gold." Hespharian recorded the presence of the two planetoid belts, both of unusual richness and density.

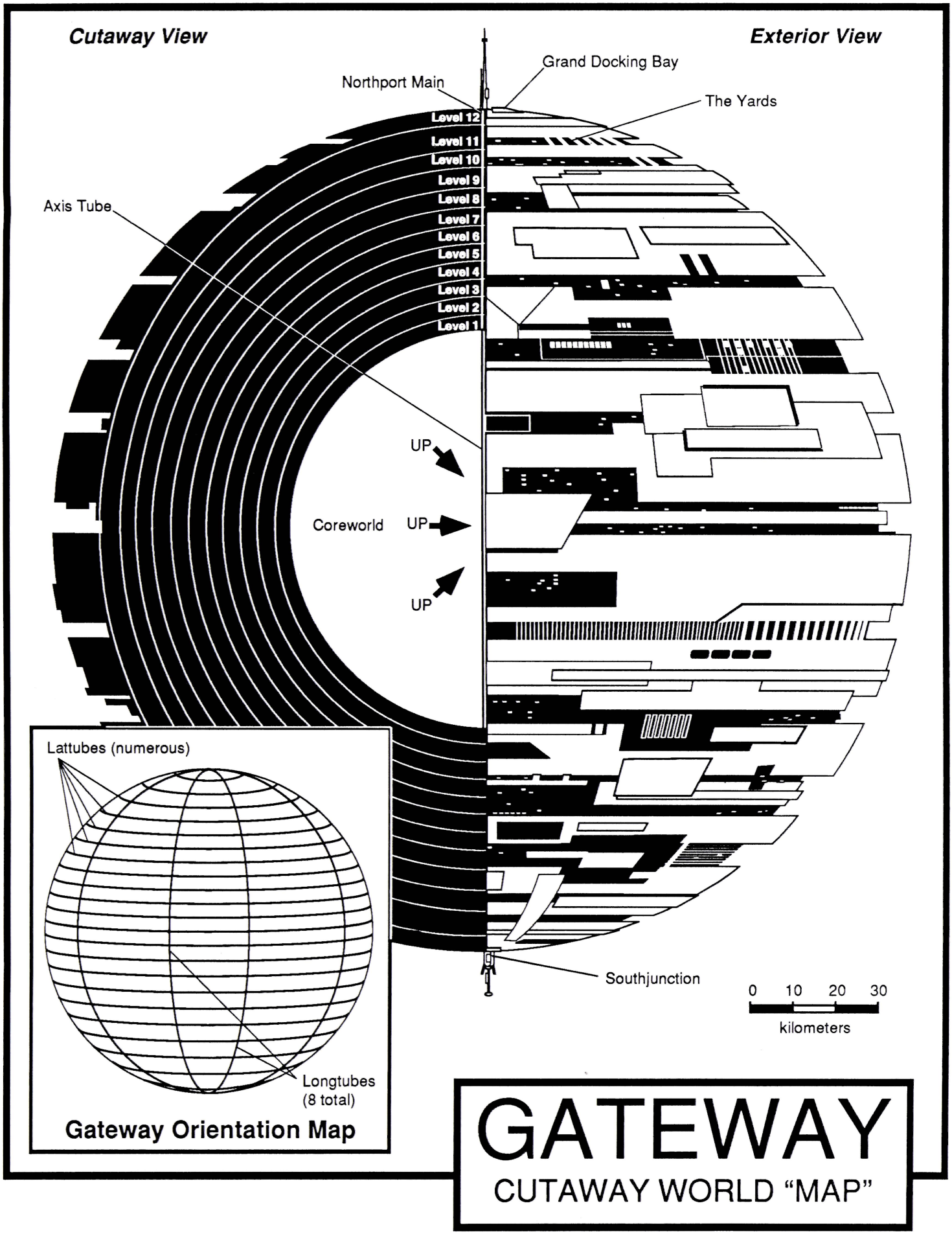
Though much of the human-inhabited galaxy was still in the dark of the Long Night, numerous worlds across known space had begun exploring their own regions and establishing trade networks. The heavy metal reserves of the Thegisthil planetoid belts seemed promising, and Galastrian was determined to exploit them. Mining operations were begun in -234 Imperial, when a star furnace and smelting plant were constructed in stellar orbit and fuel mining and processing facilities were placed in orbit around the superjovian world Thegisthil-Alpha.

Construction of a major orbital industrial plant, to be called Galastrian Metals Corporate 1, was begun in -224 Imperial, using a 150 km asteroid orbiting outside of the main Inner Belt as the basis. The core balloon method was used; nuclear munitions were planted in laser-drilled shafts to excavate a pocket at the asteroid's core, and the body was set to rotating at high speed. The core was then flash-heated by solar mirrors focused through tunnels at each rotational pole. Expanding rock vapor "ballooned" the core to a spherical cavity nearly 80 kilometers across. Once the molten interior had cooled, the axial tunnels were capped off and sealed, with shafts for elevator access to the surface.

With a surface area of over 20,100 square kilometers, the hollowed-out interior of the asteroid was terraformed by the introduction of atmosphere and water — most of which was mined from the ice rings of Thegisthil-Beta. As an industrial plant, the core was originally intended to serve as a floor for corporate buildings — workers' housing, shopping centers, work areas, and so on.

Galastrian Metals Corporate 1 was still in the early phases of construction (-200 Imperial) when first contactbetween human explorers and the K'kree took place, a star-faring race dwelling further to trailing. The new contact created much excitement in the area, which was soon officially known as Gateway Sector. . . the Gateway to trade and profit with the "Centaurs."

The excitement spawned an economic boom throughout the sector, and Galastrian Metals Corporate 1 shared in that boom. The facility was renamed Gateway Station in -180. It was believed that K'kree trade would be funnelled through the artificial worldlet, which would provide brokerage and factor services; ship maintenance, repair, and building facilities; and processed fuel.



GATEWAY

CUTAWAY WORLD "MAP"

Unfortunately, the boom did not materialize. The K'kree proved to be less than enthusiastic about trade or diplomatic contacts with other civilizations . . . especially with g'naak, "meat eaters." Increasing tensions actually led to a period of low-level conflict in the Gateway Sector between -150 and 70 Imperial, and for a time there was talk of all-out war. Toward the end of this period, however, the presence of the newly resurgent Empire, the Third Imperium, began making itself felt in the sector. Though never directly administered as part of the Imperial realm, Gateway Sector became one of those peripheral regions that benefited through trade and close association with the Imperium, as well as by an on-going exchange of technologies and personnel.

The failure to establish strong trade ties with the K'kree, however, resulted in a sector-wide economic depression beginning in about 50 Imperial, as companies and capital that had come into the area in order to exploit the expected K'kree trade withdrew or became bankrupt. The hard times in part contributed to the rising of the Citizen Workers of Gateway in 251 Imperial. The War for Gateway Independence lasted for less than a year. Casualties were, in fact, light and the conclusion a foregone one since Gateway Station's Tharverian masters were far away and had much to lose in a protracted war. The Independence Acts of 252 officially changed the name from Gateway Station to Gateway and established the artificial planetoid as an independent world in its own right.

After almost 500 years, the station was forced to begin making the transition from a profit-making facility to an inhabited and self-sufficient world. Most of the original core buildings were torn down, and soil, created by crushing carbonaceous asteroid material and seeding it with selected packets of gene-tailored bacteria, was introduced instead. Numerous varieties of trees and other vegetation were introduced, and the Equatorial Sea was created as a reservoir. Farming and parkland replaced the sterile workers' barracks, comfortable living quarters having been established in the shell long since. The majority of Gateway's food was grown, not in the Core, but in bank upon bank of hydroponic units maintained in hothouse, high-CO^2 environments within the shell.

Almost from the beginning, construction on the surface of the worldlet proceeded more rapidly than within the core. Today, after over a thousand years of continuing construction and additions, the asteroid's original, native surface is completely buried in shell upon concentric shell of living quarters and service areas; ship repair, docking and transport facilities; industrial processing and smelting plants; factories; offices, communications centers and antennae; and shipyards.

Galian Trade League

Galastrian Metals, founded on Tharver (0528) in -312 Imperial, ambitiously surveyed and mined many of the systems which comprise the modern-day Galian Federation. It was a Galastrian survey ship, *T.C.S. Hespharian,* which in -243 first discovered the planetary system later to become known as Gateway.

The Galian Trade League arose in the wake of the War for Gateway Independence in 251. In the years between 252 and 300, dozens of systems formerly belonging to Galastrian Metals broke away and became independent. Most of these joined one another in forging strong bonds of commerce; a complex network of trade routes extended as far as Prevarren and Sardis, most of the space lanes originating at or passing through Gateway.

A workers' revolt on Tharver itself ended Galastrian Metal's interstellar dominion in the Imperial year 302. In 305, a congress of system representatives met in the Fathers' Hall at Gateway to sign the League Concord, a trade pact that established an interstellar common market known as the Galian Trade League.

At its greatest extent, the Galian League comprised some 80 worlds. Less than an interstellar government, more than a simple trade alliance, the League encompassed all of the stars systems which today make up the Galian Federation, the Trindel Confederacy, and the Plavian League, as well as parts of the Viyard Concourse and a number of now independent worlds. A major war was fought with Hochiken (the Heptad War of 612), and another with the Viyard Concourse (Galian-Viyard War, 752-758), but for the most part, the League enjoyed peace and economic prosperity.

Fall of the Galian League

The collapse of the League, given by most historians as 918, had many causes. Almost certainly, the leading factor was the rise of piracy, especially in the subsectors of Ashton, Castra, Riftin, and Forcett. Gateway was having increasing difficulty maintaining the safety of the interstellar trade routes, especially across the subsectors of Castra and Ashton. Mercantile corporations were faced with either ruinous losses or the necessity of providing heavily armed escorts with each convoy.

By the early 900's, the governments of many systems had reached the conclusion that they could provide military escorts for local merchant shipping more effectively than the distant and increasingly bureaucracy-bound Gateway government. The Plavian league, especially, was de facto independent of Gateway as early as 898, though a formal declaration did not follow for another fourteen years.

As Gateway's military power waned, the pirates grew more bold. A pirate raid on Tavarand (2017) in 908 may have been the beginning of the end, for it created a major political scandal within the Gateway Government and resulted in renewed calls for protection from radical elements within the Plavian and Trindelli worlds.

The short but bitter Galian War began in 911, as rebel elements seized key positions on Viyard and Taravesh, and a major Galian fleet based at Bremen (1918) mutinied. Both Trindel and Plavian formally declared their independence, Trindel first in 912, the Plavians three years later in 915. The war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Bremen in 918, the date usually assigned to the fall of the Galian League. In fact, the League was by that time already dead.

Though the government itself had collapsed, the trade network centered on Gateway, interrupted but not dismantled by the war, continued to function. Most trading concerns, interstellar banking services, and major corporations still carried on business from Gateway, and the starport and shipbuilding facilities kept Gateway important as a center of commerce.

In 925, after a period of reorganization, the Galian League formally became the Galian Federation with the adoption of a new constitution signed in the Fathers' Hall at Gateway. The new Federation was perhaps a third of the League's former size, having lost the worlds of the Plavian League, the Viyard Concourse, and the Trindel Confederacy. Its borders were much the same as those of today, though several peripheral systems have been lost or won in various small wars over the years.

GATEWAY TODAY

The worldlet today known as Gateway Prime is spherical in shape, with a dull, metallic silver or gray color. It has a diameter

of just over 200 kilometers, and a population in excess of eight million permanent residents.

Orientation: Directions in Gateway are given using the transit system grid as a referent. "Longtubes," short for "longitudinal tubes," are high-speed transport tubes radiating from Northport access stations and circumnavigating the world. There are eight of them equally spaced around Gateway, meeting at main junction stations at the north and south polar areas.

"Lattubes", or "latitudinal tubes" run at right angles to the longtubes and are reached by stations accessed off of the longtube stops. They, too, circumnavigate the planetoid.

At each station, there are tubecars available for either express or local access. Express carries passengers to the next major lat- or longtube junction. Local cars make frequent stops along the way. There are twelve levels within Gateway, with Level 1 located just under the surface and Level 12 just "below" the skin of Gateway Core. There are longtubes and lattubes at each level.

Locations and directions use the transit grid as a referent. For example, a particular dwelling address might be given as Northport/Long 4, Lat 5 Level 4 East, Stop 12: Block 15, number 2383. The address both gives the apartment's location within Gateway and serves as directions: from Northport, take Longtube 4 to the Lattube 5 junction and descend to Level 4; take an eastbound tubecar to Stop 12; use local transit to Block 15, apartment 2383.

Tubecars: Tubecars are grav-powered vehicles consisting of a single quiet, evenly lit compartment with 12 comfortable swivel seats. The tubecar approaches a station platform and a door dilates open, allowing passengers to board or disembark.

Travel time averages 30 minutes for an express trip halfway around Gateway. Cars arrive at any given station every 10 minutes. Allowing for time spent moving from one station to another, an elevator trip between levels and several stops to catch new tubecars, a character can reach any part of Gateway in less than an hour.

Gravity: Equipping over 20,000 square kilometers with gravplates—and powering them—would have been extravagant by anyone's standards, much less a profit-minded corporation such as Galastrian Metals. Station Corporate 1 was designed as a typical large-scale space colony, a roughly spherical, inside-out world which provided artificial gravity through rotation. As the rock shell spun, centrifugal force provided the feel of gravity, with "outwards" serving as "down," and "up" being the direction of the central axis at the core. Gravity varies from about .7-G at the equator to zero-G near the poles.

Built a little at a time, the surface installations were all provided with inertial nullifiers and gravplates; as a result, "down" in surface installations facing the sky is toward the core, as in a normal, full-sized planet. Standard 1-G is used throughout the surface structures, though individual quarters can, as is usually the case, be set for any gravity desired. The trip from core to surface structures can be disconcerting, since gravity seems to increase with distance from the center of the core, then shifts to zero-G as the inertial fields eliminate the effects of the rotation-produced centrifugal force, and finally swings 180° to 1-G as artificial fields take over. Elevators designed for passengers are equipped with computer-controlled internal grav plates which allow a smooth transition from one type of gravity to another.

The Grand Docking Bay: The largest docking bay in Gateway, and the principal port of entry to the facility. It is a cavernous, rectangular opening at Gateway's north pole. Nearly 100 meters wide and 40 meters tall, the entrance is large enough to accommodate most starships of less than 10,000 tons. Normally, the Bay is left open, though it can be sealed shut by massive sliding panels at need. Ships docking within the Bay are moored under microgravity conditions to sealed passageways, through which crew and passengers can come and go in shirt-sleeve comfort.

Northport: Northport is the name given for the port facilities inside the Bay area, connecting the Bay with Coreworld. Customs and visitor information centers are located in Northport, along with shopping malls, food courts, and a variety of entertainment facilities. Over 300 spaceport-type bars, pubs, nightclubs, sleepies, lookies, lounges, and restaurants catering to every type of taste in food and entertainment are located along Northport Main, the cavernous tunnel connecting the Grand Docking Bay and Coreworld.

Northport is also the location of the main station terminals for all 12 levels for each of the eight longtube transit lines.

The Yards: The largest of Gateway's shipbuilding and repair facilities, the Yards are actually a single complex of several shipyards, the oldest of which date back to the original construction work within the planetoid. They are accessed through Gateway's Grand Docking Bay at the north pole.

Privately owned, the Gateway Yards handle 45% of Gateway's shipbuilding and repair business, the remainder being divided between three other shipyard and service facilities. The Yards are classified as a Class A starport. Refined fuel and full repair and service facilities are available.

Security is provided by Tartheniancorp, once a private company that hired mercenaries to provide security for various corporations, but now owned and leased exclusively by the Yards. Their familiar black-and-red colors and emblems are prominent on security troops patrolling the Yard areas, and on the hundreds of armed cutters and small craft which patrol vacuum areas both within the Yards and along the approach lanes outside. Tartheniancorp troops, popularly called "TCs," also serve as internal police security throughout Gateway.

Coreworld: Originally constructed as an inside-out habitat for the workers of Gateway, the surface layers now provide all the living space necessary, and Gateway's Core has been made over into a parklike setting, with trees and a small "sea" which runs about the worldlet's interior equator. Several villages, reserved primarily for Gateway's wealthy and elite, dot the landscape along the seacoast.

The view from the surface of the Core is typical of large-scale rotating colonies. The ground seems to curve up and away from the viewer in all directions. Forty kilometers overhead, the Axis is visible as a slender tube extending from the north polar cap to the south. Lightstrips along the Axis provide artificial daylight for the vegetation, as well as a 20-hour cycle of night and day.

The Farside is visible as a mosaic of vegetation, cultivated land, sea, and villages some eighty kilometers overhead, beyond the Axis. At night, it can be seen as patterns of village lights; by day it is a mist-hazed aerial view, spread across the sky like a map.

The Equatorial Sea runs in a circle along the Core's equator. Gateway's hydrographic percentage of 20 is based on this sea, which maintains the hydrological balance of moisture in the air and water for crops raised in the Core.

The Fathers' Hall: An enormous, dome-ceilinged chamber once used for political debate, the Hall is now a museum of Gateway history, including holographic representations of various historical figures and scenes from different periods in history. The exhibit includes the photo-impressionist mural entitled Gateway's Hour, which depicts the citizen-workers' rising against their Tharver masters in 251 Imperial. The written Acts of Independence are on permanent display in the center of the chamber, preserved for nearly a thousand years in a xenon atmosphere enclosed within transparent crystal. Holos of the signing of the League Concord in 305 and of the new constitution in 925, both of which occurred in this very hall, are presented hourly.

Address: Northport/Long 1, Lat 1, Level 2 East, Stop 1.

Gateway Admiralty: These are the labyrinthine office spaces used by the Galian Federation Navy. Thousands of kilometers of corridors, offices, and department spaces are occupied by the men, women, and computers which run the Federation Navy. Access is restricted to visitors with Security Clearance A-5 or higher.

Address: Northport/Long 3, Lat 2, Level 4 East, Stop 1.

Gateway Stellar Intelligence (GSI): These are the offices of Gateway's famous (some would say infamous) security agency, the GSI. Tours are offered to the public, although the areas open to visitors represent only a small part of the total spaces operated by the agency.

The GSI is specifically chartered to handle intelligence for the Galian Federation. Current areas of specific interest are the military build-ups within the Viyard Concourse and the Hochiken People's Assembly, the HPA's military operations against the Plavian League, and pirate activities throughout the sector.

The GSI actively solicits information from the public. Traders, mercenaries, explorers, anyone who discovers information of possible importance to Galian security is invited to visit the public offices of the GSI. He or she will be debriefed by a computer which will record the information and guarantee the informant complete anonymity. Some information will be rewarded with credit payments, determined by the computer and awarded on the basis of the data's importance. In some cases the computer will summon a human debriefer who will interrogate the informant in greater detail.

Anyone wishing to talk with a GSI officer is invited to visit the GSI public offices and talk with a duty agent.

Access to restricted areas requires security clearance which varies depending on the area.

Address: Northport/Long 5, Lat 5, Level 10 West, Stop 2.

Gateway Xenoarchaeological Foundation (GXF): A not-for-profit organization dedicated to research into the histories of the various non-human races in the sector. It employs over 2,000 men and women.

Information on the history, lore, technology, and biology of each of the sector's native races is stored in the Foundation's computers. Visitors requesting access to this information can receive hardcopy printouts at special public booths in the information area for Cr10.

The Gateway is constantly mounting expeditions to study various of the sector's races, both those still extant and several known only from the ruins they left behind thousands of years ago. Openings occasionally exist for qualified personnel with military or scout backgrounds, especially those with experience exploring unknown territory and alien environments. The Foundation also occasionally awards credit payments for artifacts recovered by freelance explorers/archaeologists. The famous Star of Zora, a cut xanthine crystal discovered on Zora (2614) and now on display in the Foundation Museum, was purchased for Cr500,000 from the man who found it in 1024.

Address: Northport/Long 3, Lat 1, Level 1 East, Stop 10.

K'kree Trade Delegation/Center and Quarters: Since Gateway was originally founded on the promise of expanded trade with the newly contacted non-human major race to trailing, it is only fitting that Gateway house a permanent trade delegation from these fascinating and charming beings from right next door. Established in 1108, the Delegation occupies a suite of offices and living spaces especially adapted to K'kree comfort and utility. The Business and Trade Meeting Arena alone covers nearly 300 hectares of open "terrain," and its vaulted ceiling projects a perpetual view of sun and sky timed to show the progress of day and night, as well as simulate varying weather patterns and cloud types. The K'kree quarters are spacious and designed with built-in holographics to keep these gentle herbivores comfortable and happy.

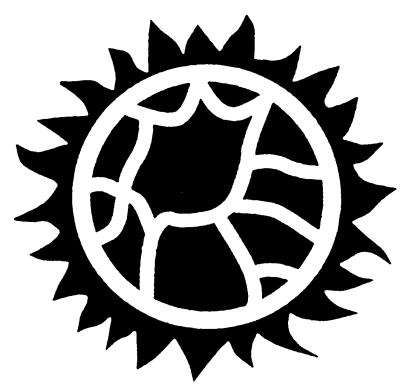
Several K'kree families can be found here at any time. Specific questions dealing with travel to or trade with the Two Thousand Worlds, customs regulations, or simple curiosity about the K'kree people will be answered either by a K'kree representative or one of the center's human employees.

Address: Northport/Long 7, Lat 7, Level 8 West, Stop 5: Block 12.

Gateway Astrophysical Center and Library: Without doubt the finest astronomical research center and library in the Sector, Gateway Astrophysical is the repository for a vast store of data on the suns and worlds of Gateway Sector. Hardcopy printouts are available at automated booths in the information area for Cr5 each.

The Center occasionally hires freelance explorers or ship captains willing to undertake planetary surveys or update existing library information. Interested parties should communicate with the Astrophysical Center Offices at Stop 7.

Address: Northport/Long 1, Lat 3 Level 1 East, stops 6 and 7.



Gateway

Gateway 1220 AS62688-B Ri Ni 822 Ga K0 V

Primary: Tegisthil, spectral class K0 V. Mass 0.723. Stellar diameter 0.711. Luminosity 0.284.

Gateway Prime: Mean orbital radius 105 million km (0.7 AU). Period 160.15 std days. Diameter 205 km. Mass 0.025. Density 0.92. Mean interior gravity 0.575 (artificial).

Interior atm pressure 0.85. Composition oxygen-nitrogen mix. Hydrographic percentage 19%. Mean surface temperature 21.4°C. No native life.

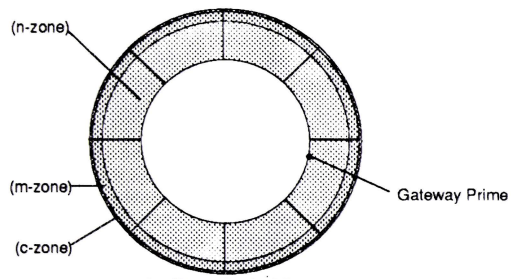
Total world population 8.19 million. Primary cities — Gateway Prime, 7.89 million; Coreworld, 31,000. World government civil service bureaucracy. Tech level — high common B, low common A. Primary resources — ores, radioactives, metals, recordings, documents.

Belt predominate body diameter 10km-500km. Belt zones — nickel-iron (n)-50%, stony (m)-40%, carbonaceous/ice (c)-10%. Belt width 0.5 AUs.

Gateway started originally as rather unremarkable 150km asteroid of the Galian system. In -224 Imperial, miners seeking a site to construct a major orbital plant for processing the belt's ore, chose an asteroid orbiting along the inner edge of the innermost belt. Galastrian Metals was still in the early phases of construction (-200 Imperial) when the first contact between humans and K'kree took place. Much excitement ensued, and the area soon became known as the "Gateway" to trade and profit with the newfound aliens.

By 251 Imperial, the citizen workers of the processing facility revolted, and the asteroid became an independent world named Gateway Station, or more commonly, Gateway.

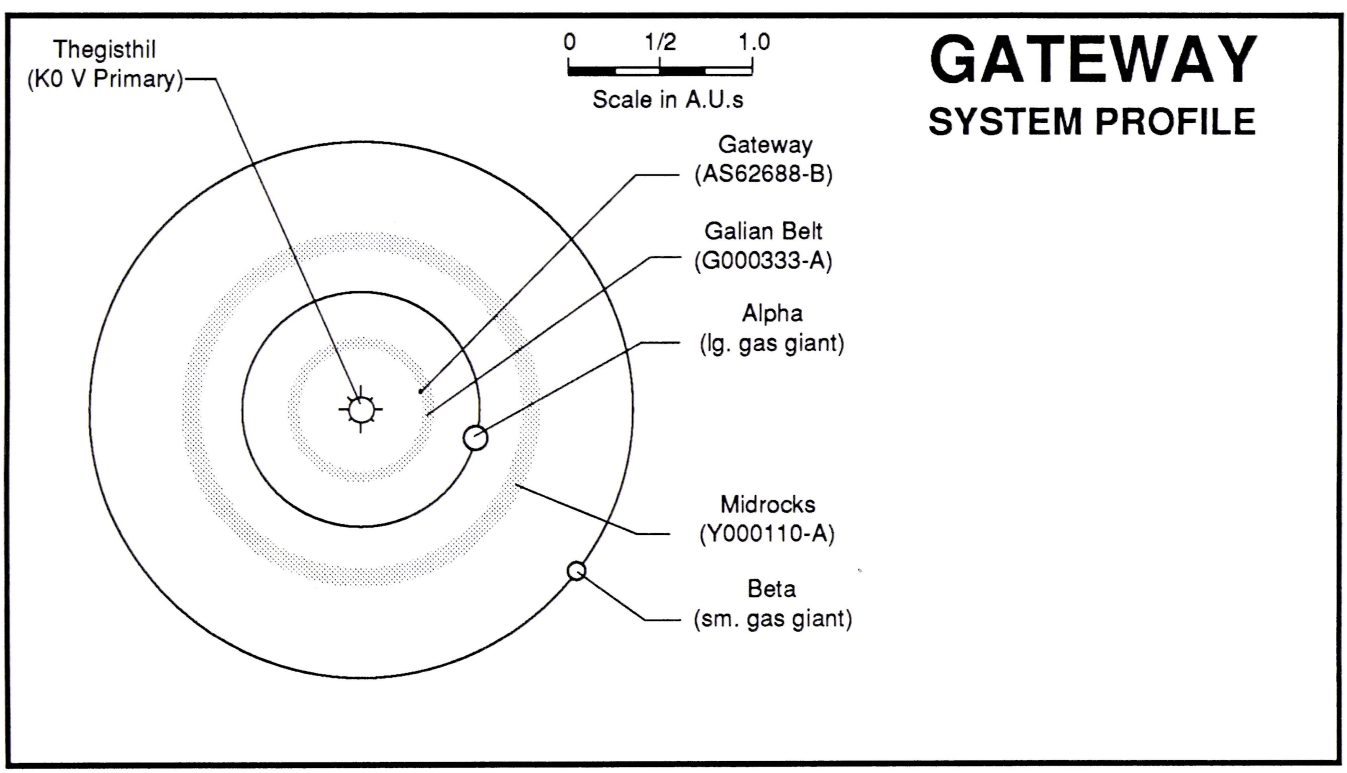
Today, Gateway has had over a thousand years of additional layers of construction added to its surface, now making the asteroid just over 200km in diameter. Its inner core is hollow and has been terraformed with plants, animals, and a small equatorial sea.



Galian Belt Map

Gateway is the capital of the thriving Galian Federation and a hub of trade for the entire sector.

Need: compounds, metals, artforms, software, documents



GOVERNMENTS OF GATEWAY

LORDS OF THUNDER: GATEWAY SECTOR LIBRARY DATA

INTRODUCTION

Gateway Sector, unlike the familiar sectors of the Imperial region, is — for reasons of history and galactography — a patchwork of worlds and interstellar governments. In all, nine major intersystem governments exist, wholly or in part, within the sector's boundaries.

This section gives the Gateway Sector's history, and background information on each of the governments located within its borders.

GATEWAY SECTOR OVERVIEW

The Imperium never reached as far as Gateway Sector. That fact is important in an understanding of the people who populate Gateway's worlds.

The first human explorers probably reached the sector early during the Long Night. Records from this period are incomplete, but it is likely that colonies had been founded on Tharver, Bremen, and Salur as early as -1700 Imperial, over 2800 years ago. The colony on Carlton was definitely founded in -1511 (AD 3007), and by that time trade routes and established spacelanes already existed among a number of the sector's worlds.

These first explorers and colonizers were almost exclusively Solomani, descendents of the first waves of Solomani colonization which had spread out from Sol during the centuries after the fall of the Second Imperium. They came for a variety of reasons: overcrowding, poverty, or limited opportunities at home; the promise of new worlds, new frontiers, and new business opportunities on unexplored worlds. Almost without exception, they represented the rugged individualists of their parent worlds, the ones who could not or would not conform to the strictures of their own societies. They arrived in the new sector bearing the traits of independence, resourcefulness, individualism, and a strong belief in personal liberty and equality.

Today, the sector is precariously balanced between two major galactic cultures, the Imperial region to spinward and the K'kree to trailing. Though considered by galactographers to be "client states," i.e., politically dominated by one or the other of the primary cultures, the various governments of Gateway stubbornly cling to their own individuality and liberty. Indeed, many of the current political problems within the sector arise from clashes over what separate states regard as challenges to their territorial prerogatives. As evidence of this, there is no recognized sector capital, though Gateway Prime may come closest with its cosmopolitan atmosphere and control over the interstellar trade network. Instead, each interstellar government has its own capital, its own military forces, and its own network of trade and commerce.

Gateway's human inhabitants continue to display the love of personal freedom and rugged individualism brought to the region by their ancestors thousands of years ago. "Find two Trindelli and you have three sides to the problem" is a very old saying which can just as easily be applied to the human inhabitant of any of Gateway Sector's worlds. Stubborn, defiant, rebellious; freedom-loving, independent, and self sufficient; these are the traits and qualities which will enable the human cultures of Gateway Sector to endure, whatever the political future of the region might be.

HISTORY OF GATEWAY SECTOR

Since most of the human settlers who came to the region 2800 years ago sought new wealth and new lives, it is not surprising that they brought with them a powerful capitalistic work ethic. Tharver (0528), settled quite early in the sector's history, was by -500 Imperial the headquarters for several powerful commercial corporations with vast interstellar holdings. Many worlds throughout the sector, including Ariel, Valkyr, Faarview in the Alphaaric system, and Gateway itself all began as secondary colonies established by Tharver corporations for the purposes of mining, chemical processing, or trade.

Galastrian Metals was founded by entrepreneur Richard Kerredy on Tharver in -312. Gateway itself was originally an asteroid colony constructed for processing and shipment of raw materials from particularly rich asteroid belts circling a star called Thegisthil.

The region was not organized as a sector until -198 Imperial, two years after First Contact was made with the K'kree. The sector was called Gateway because it was expected that the worlds of the region would become a gateway to commerce with the newly contacted Major Race to spinward.

The promises of wealth and trade with the new race did not materialize. Competition between rival corporations had reached such extremes by this time that open warfare broke out. The period from -150 to about 70 is known as the Corporate Sector Wars. The warfare was, for the most part, low-level skirmishing marked by raids and privateering and always limited by the fact that war is a terribly expensive way to conduct business.

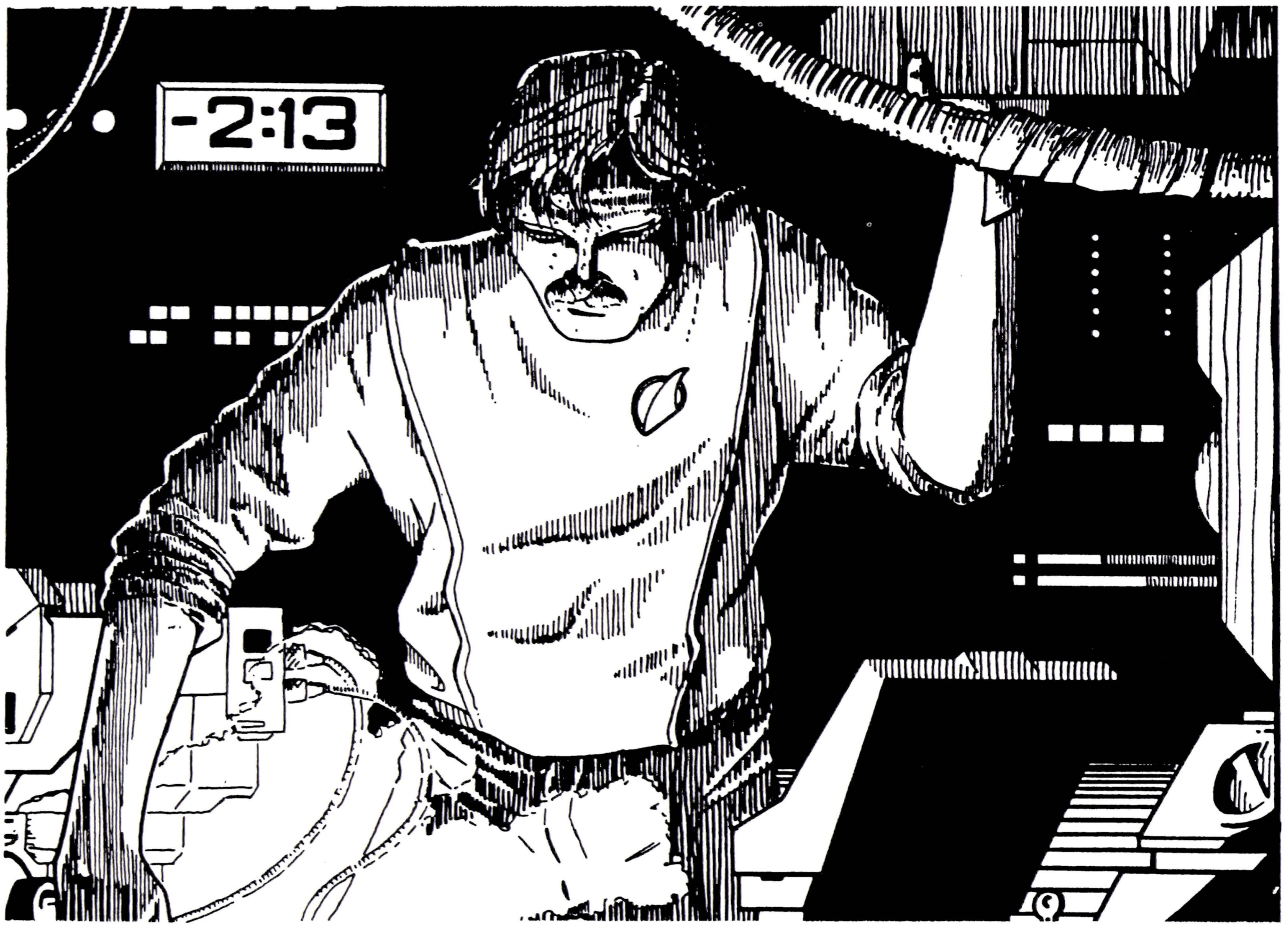
The Third Imperium was established in the Imperial Year 0. By 70, as the Corporate Wars were winding down, the Imperial presence was felt for the first time in the sector. Imperial Scout Service vessels called at Tharver in 64, and an Imperial embassy was opened there in 75. The Third Imperium never has dominated the sector either politically or militarily, but has been content to let it remain a backwater buffer zone trailing the Imperial frontier. Imperial relations with the K'kree were established through Gateway. The first formal meeting of Imperial and K'kree ambassadors was hosted on neutral Mneomon in 103.

For a time, it appeared that the large interstellar concerns would dominate the worlds of Gateway. Eventually, though, the individualism and independent spirit which are the hallmarks of the Gaters, as human inhabitants of the sector call themselves, reasserted themselves. A combination of political and economic factors combined to generate the conditions for a series of workers' revolts.

These revolts, occurring during the period of 200 to 400 Imperial, established the independence of dozens of former corporate worlds, among them Gateway, which declared its independence in 252. Within the next several centuries, the power vacuum left by the large corporations was filled by independent mercantile firms and free traders.

Success brought growth . . . and new organization. Trade leagues arose to protect commercial space lanes and guarantee free trade.

The next five centuries were dominated by the rise of four separate powers.



Hochiken Republic/Hochiken People's Assembly: Lying along the coreward border of the sector was the Hochiken Republic, established in 425 after a series of workers' revolts overthrew the Vanadian Cartel in the previous year. Beginning as a democratic and representative interstellar government, the Republican government was taken over by a military coup in 590 and renamed the Hochiken People's Assembly. Since then, the HPA has become harsh and repressive, the citizens of all of its worlds living in virtual police states.

Galian Trade League/Galian Federation: The Galian Trade League rose from the foundation of Galastrian Metal's holdings. Galastrian Metals collapsed during a workers' revolt on Tharver in 302, but within three years the League Concord had been signed establishing the Galian Trade League, a trade corporation which essentially took over most of Galastrian's former holdings under looser reigns of authority and control. By the mid-500's, the League incorporated all of what is today the Galian Federation, the Plavian League, the Trindel Confederacy, and the coreward worlds of the Viyard Concourse.

In 750, nine worlds which called themselves the Viyard Alliance broke away from Gateway's control and, two years later, petitioned to join the Collective. Gateway sent a fleet to force the rebellious former Federation worlds back into line and was beaten at the Battle of Coralee (754). The Treaty of Umbrin (758) established the independence of the Viyard worlds, which subsequently joined with the Collective to form the modern Viyard Concourse.

By 900, various factors — but especially the rise of piracy — had brought about a serious further weakening of the Galian Trade League. Full-fledged civil war broke out in 911, leading to the break-up of the League and the founding of the modern Galian Federation in 925.

Collective/Viyard Alliance/Viyard Concourse: Rimward of the Galian Trade League was the Collective, a socialist experiment founded on the success of yet another workers' revolt, this one on Balaclaron in 320. Growing slowly, it assimilated the Viyard Alliance in 752, setting in motion the political events which ended with the first Viyard-Galian War. The war ended in 758 with the Treaty of Umbrin. Nine worlds formerly belonging to the Galian Trade League — Viyard, Coralee, the Gaspar Belt, Ariel, Umbrin, Tangist, Holidin, Kever, and Namitin — all were incorporated into the new Viyard Concourse, which was essentially the old Collective, expanded and under a new name.

Pirates: Though not a government in the accepted sense, piracy is very much a factor in modern sector politics and galactography.

Where there is commerce, there is piracy. Piracy of a sort was widely practiced during the Corporate Sector Wars, when privateers — raiders operating quasi-legally in the employ of one or another of the combatants — were the principal military arm of the warring corporations. With peace — or corporate mergers — some unemployed privateers took to freelancing. Numerous new corporations were founded on capital accumulated by successful raiders, and often these corporations served as fronts for continuing pirate activities.

Like corporations, piracy cannot exist without a market. Most important, raider fleets require maintenance, fuel, food, weapon reloads, and ports for R&R after a long mission. Numerous starports — notably Carlton, Freeport, Freehaven, and Sardis — all began as pirate bases, places where raiders could be brought for servicing and refitting, where booty could be sold, and crews could be recruited. The Swanfei Free Worlds today are little more than a thinly disguised association of old pirate havens, made prosperous and respectable by wealth siphoned from the nearby trade lines.

The most successful of the pirate bands was the Fellowship of Kotar. Records are incomplete, but it is believed that the Fellowship was operating within the region now called the Four Subsectors as early as 700, over four hundred years ago. The Fellowship suffered a devastating military defeat in a battle with Plavian naval elements off Neopis in 1106. Subsequent sweeps by League hunterfleets captured most of the Fellowship's leaders, seized their ships, and destroyed their bases.

Since then, the organization known as the Castran Marauders appears to have picked up where the Fellowship left off, and it is thought that most of the Marauders' leaders began as Fellowship officers.

Piracy remains a serious problem throughout the sector. In particular, pirate raids threaten the major trade links between the spinward and trailing regions of the sector, especially the Gateway-Sardis Run.

TOM PETERS

THE GOVERNMENTS OF GATEWAY

Today there are nine major multisystem governments represented within the boundaries of the Gateway Sector. The region is currently in a stage of political flux, following the break-up of the Galian Trade League within the past two centuries. These two centuries have been marked by war, low-level conflict, piracy and raids among both the worlds of the multisystem governments and the various independent worlds.

The following is a brief description of Gateway Sector's principal governments.

Galian Federation

One of the largest of the Gateway Sector's governments, the Federation is comprised of thirty-two systems, including the artificial world of Gateway Station (1220), the Federation's capital. It includes portions of four subsectors: Ownsbee, Arconna, Beckann, and Windfleet.

Based on principles of free trade and representative democracy, the Galian Federation has long presented itself as a haven for the repressed and persecuted of other systems. In recent years, however, an influx of numerous refugees from other systems within the sector, especially political refugees escaping Hochiken repression, has caused a tightening of immigration laws and regulations. These laws can usually be circumvented by immigrants who have enough hard currency. The wealthy merchants fleeing the K'kree advance into Megusard are a case in point.

The Galian Federation pictures itself as the defender of free trade and representative democracy within the sector. With the possible exception of the Hochiken People's Assembly, they are almost certainly the most powerful government militarily. Their naval presence is felt far beyond the nominal borders of the Federation, particularly along the vulnerable Gateway-Sardis Run which links two halves of the sector.

The modern Galian Federation is actually a shadow of the much larger Galian Trade League, which fragmented during the early 900's. Many Galian leaders today have publicly expressed their opinion that the old League should be reunited in the face of threats from the HPA and the Viyard Concourse.

Trindel Confederacy

The Trindel Confederacy is an offshoot of the old Galian Trade League, one of several unions which broke away during the civil disturbances of the last several centuries. Located in the Beckann and Ashton subsectors, it is composed of twelve systems. The Confederacy is actually a loose union of three smaller intersystem governments, with separate capitals at Tristar (1815), Trindel (1725), and Ashton (1926).

The Trindel Confederacy has been caught in the on-again/off-again war between the Galian Federation and the Viyard Concourse. Officially neutral, both the Federation and the Concourse have charged the Confederacy with covertly aiding the enemy and allowing certain systems to be used as military staging areas. Within the past several months, two Confederacy systems have been seized by foreign expeditionary forces: Taravesh (1527) has been occupied by a Galian battlefleet under the command of Rear Admiral Jaime Marcus, while neighboring Drovinthic (1627) has been seized by Viyard naval forces. Viyard charges that both supposedly neutral systems were used as staging areas for a series of damaging raids against Coralee and the Gaspar Belt.

The Confederacy, unwilling to side with either of her larger neighbors, seems doomed to remain the prize in the military tug-of-war between Gateway and Viyard.

Plavian League

The Plavian League is another break-away from the Galian Trade League. Made up of twenty-one systems, it is primarily located within the borders of the Castra subsector, but includes territory in Windfleet and a single system, Prevarren, in the Denkard subsector. Like the Trindel Confederacy, the League is a union of smaller states. The most important are the Heptad worlds of Windfleet, a cluster of seven inhabited systems which are currently recovering from a vicious interstellar war with the Hochiken Assembly. The principal capital is at Plavis (2113), but regional capitals also exist at Tash (1513) and at Bremen (1818)

The threat of war hangs over the entire League. HPA threats and demonstrations — particularly their demands for the surrender of the Heptad — have left no doubt in Leaguer minds that a new interstellar war is imminent. Several of the League's trailing worlds — notably Tavarand, Lem, and Colby — have suffered heavily in pirate raids during the past several years. One of the League's most powerful naval bases is located at Bremen, expressly for the purpose of combatting piracy in the sector.

The Plavian League has been making overtures to the powerful Galian Federation for aid in the expected war with the HPA, and several mutual assistance pacts have been signed. It seems likely that if the HPA occupies the Heptad, as they have repeatedly threatened to do, the Galian Federation and the Plavian League will find themselves allies in a desperate interstellar war.

Hochiken People's Assembly

One of the largest of the Gateway Sector multisystem governments, the Assembly sprawls across much of both the Atoon and Denkard subsectors and extends beyond the sector boundaries coreward into the Stars End Sector. The capital is located on Granth (1601).

Currently under the control of a powerful government led by Kalen, a charismatic dictator who seized control of Hochiken twelve years ago, the Assembly is widely viewed as one of the most serious threats to stability in the entire region. An aggressive and expansionist foreign policy has led to conflicts on numerous worlds in Atoon and Windfleet. Concord, a formerly independent world on the Atoon-Windfleet border, was annexed outright a year ago, and there is a continuing struggle for political control of several of the metal-rich systems of the Heptad within the Plavian League. Recent raids on several of the Heptad worlds — notably the water world of Vosrin (1512) — have brought the HPA to the brink of war with the neighboring Plavian League. The HPA accuses the League of interfering with its internal affairs and waging "economic warfare" in the form of trade sanctions and embargos against Assembly trade goods.

Privately, it is likely that the Assembly would welcome a war with the Plavian League, which the HPA military views as weak and divided. The worlds of the HPA are poor in natural resources and minerals, especially heavy elements. Control of the Heptad, especially metal-rich Windfleet and Tash, would solve many of the HPA's problems in this area.

The HPA suffers from an accident of astrography. By chance, fourteen of the HPA's twenty-nine systems are separated from the rest by a three-parsec gulf, meaning that only ships capable of Jump-3 or better can make the crossing between the Assembly's two halves. The Assembly government is keenly interested in acquiring a Jump-2 route, which would be possible if two independent systems, Orcana (2105) and Tarkaan (2107) could be brought into the empire. The Granth government has been putting intense political pressure on Orcana recently in a bid to force them to join the Assembly. The HPA has declared Orcana a blockade interdiction zone, and vessels may be subject to boarding and search by HPA warships.

Another threat to the region's stability is the recent Treaty of Granth, which makes the HPA and the Viyard Concourse nominal allies. This is viewed as a clever move on the part of Kalen, who with this single move has ensured that the Plavian League's Galian allies will be tied up in any future sector war fighting the Concourse and will be unable to substantially help the Plavians.

Most observers feel that a sector-wide war with the HPA as the principal belligerent is inevitable, especially now that the Treaty of Granth has been ratified by both parties.

Viyard Concourse

A large multisystem government consisting of over twenty-five worlds, located in portions of the Beckann, Ashton, Ariel, and Cinder subsectors and extending beyond the sector borders into the Crucis Margin. Primarily a corporate entity, the Concourse was formed by a union of fragments of the Viyard Worlds which broke away from the Galian Trade League over a century ago, and a military alliance of worlds bordering the Crucis Margin originally known as the Collective.

The nominal capital of the Concourse is Viyard (1829). The old Collective capital at Balaclaron (1637) still figures prominently in Concourse politics, however.

The Concourse is currently engaged in a protracted struggle with the Galian Federation over a number of independent worlds which lie between the generally recognized borders of the two governments, including Alphaaric, a world in the Ariel subsector inhabited by an advanced but enigmatic non-human civilization. Although open war has not been declared, numerous skirmishes and border incidents have brought the area to a fever pitch. The recent Treaty of Granth allied the Concourse with the Hochiken People's Assembly to coreward, a move which is viewed with alarm by observers who see this as a means by the HPA to separate the Plavian League from its Galian ally.

Akeena Union

A group of eleven systems covering parts of the Denkard, Lowton, and Forcett subsectors. Seven of these systems, including Akeen, the capital (2708), are located in the Lowton subsector.

The Union is an interstellar government dominated by the Akeed, a non-human minor race originating on Akeen. A large human minority exists on most of the Union's worlds, however, and numerous human mercantile firms maintain a powerful presence on several Akeena worlds.

Lying within a few parsecs of the K'kree-dominated Gh!hken and Luretir!girr subsectors, the Akeena Union has close trade and diplomatic ties with the K'kree. While not, strictly speaking, vegetarians, the Akeed ingest minerals directly from soil, water, and decomposing organic material, and so their personal habits are not offensive to the K'kree.

Although the Akeed have attempted to remain neutral in the rising storm of impending sector war, they have not been entirely successful. Officially disinterested in the politics of their human-dominated neighbors, the human minority within their own borders has become restive of late, particularly in the wake of Hochiken pressures brought to bear on various nearby independent worlds. Riots have been reported in the human enclaves on Veel (2307) and Smuggler's Hide (2310). Plavis has recently charged the Akeed with providing safe havens for pirates and has threatened punitive raids. Smuggler's Hide is notorious for being used by pirates as a raider port.

It is certain that Akeed neutrality will be sorely tried in coming months.

Swanfei Independency

Also known as the "Swanfei Free Worlds," or by the somewhat romanticized name of the "Pirate Worlds," the Swanfei Independency actually began as a haven for interstellar freebooters operating in the Ashton, Riftin, and Forcett subsectors. Like Port Royal in the history of old Earth, Swanfei's nominal capital of Carlton grew powerful by serving as a free port to smugglers, pirates, and freelance traders across half the sector.

The name "Swanfei" comes from Swanfeh, a minor human race which occupied the worlds of the Independency before the pirates arrived. Descendents of far-ranging Terran starfarers who reached Carlton perhaps two thousand years ago, the Swanfeh settled Carlton first, then later built up an interstellar empire which numbered perhaps thirty worlds at its greatest extent.

The Swanfei worlds today have a wide-open, rough-and-ready reputation linked to their well-known association with various pirate bands. Carlton and the other Swanfei worlds are reputed to be places where literally anything can be had for a price.

Numerous legitimate enterprises operate out of the Independency. Carlton is well-known as a hiring center for mercenaries from all across the sector and beyond. Several mercenary associations — notably the Gateway Rangers — take men and women with military experience and hire them out to parties willing to pay their price. Ranger tickets in the last few years have included training guerrillas on Kolan, and providing security forces for a petrochemical factory on Vole which was recently raided by Castran Marauder forces.

Megusard Corporate

Originally instituted as Megusard Interstellar, a multisystem corporation based on the world of Sardis (2630), Megusard became an interstellar government over a period of several decades during the period known in local history as the Pirate Wars.

Far from the borders of the old Galian Trade League, Megusard Interstellar was forced to rely on its own devices when pirates operating throughout the Ashton, Riftin and Linder subsectors threatened to cut off the trade routes connecting Megusard's worlds with other human worlds to spinward. The situation became worse when the Galian Trade League broke up, and several competing markets — the Plavian League, the Trindel Confederacy, and the Galian Federation — appeared in the old League's place.

So far, the Corporate has managed to stay reasonably free of the conflicting politics of the other Gateway governments. Megusard's strongest links are with the Galian Federation, links based on the independent trade route known as the Gateway-Sardis Run. A serious concern among Sardis officials is that the assimilation of the Trindel Confederacy by the Viyard Concourse would bring several of the Run's worlds — especially Lanu (1721) and Desdemone (2022) — into easy range of Viyard strike forces and raiders.

For centuries, Megusard's principal trade partner has been the Renkard Union, lying close to trailing. The Corporate has watched the assimilation of the old Union with considerable trepidation. K'kree diplomatic Xxurghaa, or envoys, have arrived representing the Lords of Thunder, and it seems clear that the K'kree are determined to take over Megusard in the same way.

The government on Sardis, knowing that it cannot hope to defeat the K'kree in open war, has been pursuing a policy of appeasement. K'kree charges that refugee camps on Kolan and elsewhere are being used to train guerrillas for raids into Renkard space have resulted in a crackdown on all mercenary operations in the area. Several groups have been selling advanced weaponry to anti-K'kree military forces operating on Megusard worlds, and these groups have recently been forced to resort to smuggling operations to get these weapons through.

Public feeling in Megusard regarding government policy is mixed. Many government officials and military personnel openly help anti-K'kree operations, at the same time that the government officially is trying to shut them down.

Megusard is balanced at the edge of a precipice. K'kree territorial ambitions are not going to be satisfied by the takeover of the Renkard Union, and Megusard stands next in line in the Xuruk Empire's spinward expansion.

The final confrontation is only a matter of time.

Renkard Union

The Renkard Union was until recently a thriving traders' union encompassing some twenty systems located within the Riftin and Farina subsectors and across the Gateway Sector border into the neighboring sector of Luretir!girr. Primarily organized for trade and self-defense, the Union was peaceful, though it maintained a powerful spacefleet for use against the predations of pirates.

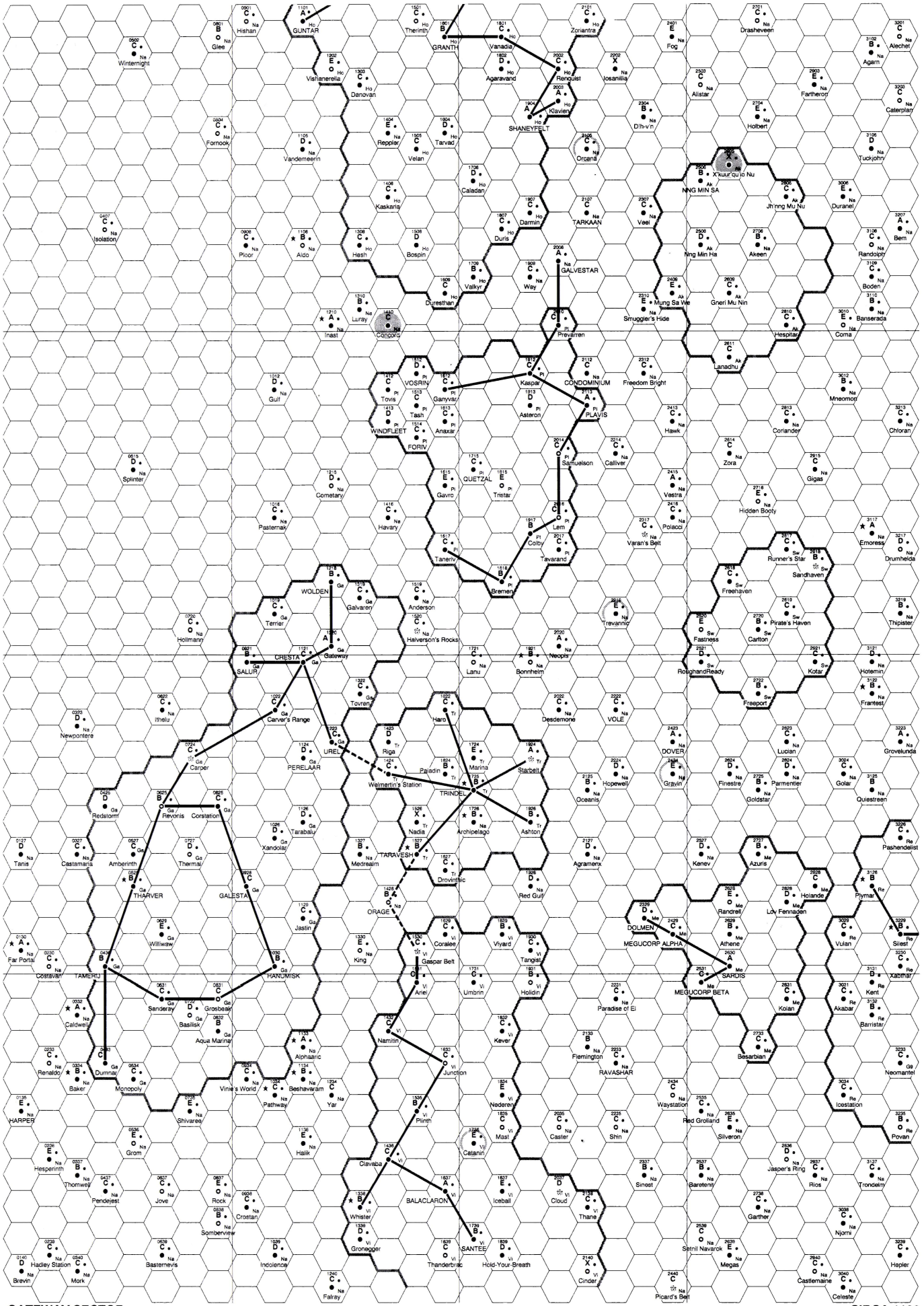
The fleet was sufficient for escort duty and protection against pirate raids, but proved inadequate against more powerful opponents. In 1106, a crucial space battle at Xabthar was lost by Renkard Grand Admiral Hugo Vandamien, and K'kree ground forces were able to land and seize the Union's capital at Silest. Since that time, the worlds of the Union have been completely dominated by the Xaar'keer! forces of the K'kree warlord called Kaxk, also known as the Lords of Thunder.

It should be noted in passing that Kaxk's clan Ktiir!t'krik is not formally acknowledged as part of the K'kree T't'tkahk Xeng Kirr, the Two Thousand Worlds, an empire which occupies all or part of some fourteen full sectors beyond Luretir!girr, the sector lying between K'kree space and Gateway Sector.

The worlds of the Old Union have been merged with the empire of the Ktiir!t'krik, which is now the single largest political entity of Luretir!girr Sector. Each planet is now ruled by a Steppelord loyal to Kaxk. The empire is also commonly known as the Xuruk Empire, a misnomer since the K'kree word "Xuruk" refers to any collective of several herds in a given geographical area.

K'kree laws that prohibit the eating of meat and that impose what amounts to second-class citizenship on all non-K'kree inhabitants of the Union have transformed the thriving state into a police tyranny. Many former pirates have entered the lucrative smuggling trade along Renkard's borders, their principal cargo refugees from the Union's worlds.

The K'kree maintain several operational battlefleets in the Union. They are engaged most of the time in suppressing smuggling and guerrilla operations. One K'kree battleship, the Kirunika'rra, has been reported to be Kaxk's flagship.



GATEWAY SECTOR **CIRCA 1123**

GATEWAY SECTOR

LORDS OF THUNDER: SECTOR UWP DATA LISTING

Tanis	0127	DA89654-8		Ni Ri		220	Na	M5D
Far Portal	0130	A238346-A	N			823	Na	M0III
Harper	0135	E647ABC-9		Hi In		115	Na	M8V
Brevin	0140	D463310-A		Lo Ni		120	Na	K8V
Costavan	0230	C360431-A		Ni De		601	Na	M5V M5V
Renaldo	0233	C230668-9		Na Ni Po De		323	Na	F8V
Hesperinth	0236	E673675-8		Ni		905	Na	K1V
Hadley Station	0239	CBBA200-8		Fl Wa		713	Na	A5V
Newpontere	0323	D597488-9		Ni		724	Na	M8V
Castamaria	0327	C64A672-A		Na Ni Wa		201	Na	K2V K8V
Caldwell	0332	A401654-A	N	Na Ni Va Ic		323	Na	M5V
Baker	0334	B87679B-8	N	Ag		105	Na	G5V
Thornwell	0337	B7768AB-8				601	Na	M9V
Mork	0340	C558445-4		Ni		711	Na	M5V M6V M6V
Isolation	0407	C7C0200-C		Lo Ni De		714	Na	M3V
Redstorm	0425	D626888-8				900	Ga	M0V
Tamerij	0430	B467998-B		Hi		305	Ga	K2V M6V
Dumnar	0433	C554511-7		Ag Ni		700	Ga	K3V M9d
Pendejest	0437	CAB2358-7		Lo Ni Fl		821	Na	M8V
Winternight	0502	C516254-A		Lo Ni Ic		522	Na	M9d
Splinter	0515	DAAA100-8		Fl Ni Lo Wa		212	Na	F5V
Amberinth	0527	C785897-A		Ri		800	Ga	G8V M3V
Tharver	0528	B775985-9	N	In Hi		111	Ga	F9V
Monopoly	0534	C88889A-5		Ri		213	Ga	K4V M5V
Grom	0536	EAA0300-7		De Lo		601	Na	M0III F6d
Ithelu	0622	C675512-A		Ag Ni		933	Na	M5V
Revonis	0625	B220310-A		Lo Ni Po De		702	Ga	M8V
Williwaw	0629	E999533-5		Ni		402	Ga	K0V
Sanderay	0631	C59A578-9		Wa		911	Ga	M5V M5V
Jove	0637	C210643-9		Na Ni		912	Na	M4V
Basternevis	0639	C575556-8		Ag Ni		521	Na	F7V
Hollmann	0720	C9B0489-8		Ni De		313	Na	K9V M4V M9V
Carper	0724	C000447-B		Ni As		913	Ga	M6V
Thermal	0727	D750300-9		De Po		224	Ga	M3V
Basilisk	0732	D300674-4		Na Ni Va		402	Ga	M5V M5V
Shivaree	0735	E768758-7		Ag Ri		812	Na	K7V
Glee	0801	B130679-A		Na Ni Po De		310	Na	M2V
Fornook	0804	C100403-9		Na Va		102	Na	K9V
Corstation	0825	CS0A000-7		Ic Ba		011	Ga	M6V
Grosbeak	0831	C7C0200-A		Lo Ni De		710	Ga	M3V
Aqua Marina	0832	B58A854-A		Ri Wa		400	Ga	G8V
Rock	0837	E420200-6		De Po		112	Na	M2V
Somberview	0838	B210899-7		Na		602	Na	K5V
Hishan	0901	C200478-9		Ni Va		211	Na	M3V
Ploor	0908	C553310-7		Lo Ni Po		821	Na	F5V
Salur	0921	B746989-A	N	In Hi		911	Ga	K9V M0V
Galesta	0928	C797988-9		In Hi		310	Ga	F8V
Vinie's World	0934	C4357CC-6				401	Na	M1VI
Crostan	0938	C243342-4		Lo Ni Po		202	Na	M2V
Gulf	1012	D679443-7		Ni		913	Na	M5V M5V
Pasternak	1016	C301698-9		Na Ni Va Ic		214	Na	M9d
Terrier	1019	C869575-A		Ni		813	Ga	K7V
Carver's Range	1022	C669642-7		Ni Ri		712	Ga	F8V
Xandolar	1026	D626888-9				514	Ga	M0V
Hanumisk	1030	B642998-A		Hi In Po		112	Ga	M7V M7V
Pathway	1034	C748551-B	A	Ni		113	Na	G1V
Indolence	1039	D585430-8		Ni		912	Na	K5V M0V
Guntar	1101	A8969AA-A		In		222	Ho	K1V
Vandemeerin	1105	D87876A-9		Ag		312	Na	G2V
Aldo	1108	B200623-A	N	Na Ni Va		412	Na	M9V
Cresta	1121	C758988-C		Hi		303	Ga	M1V M5V
Perelaar	1124	D8A8997-A		Hi Fl		123	Ga	M3V
Tarabalu	1126	D454256-9		Lo Ni		911	Ga	F7V
Jastin	1129	C76A626-A		Ni Wa		125	Ga	M0V
Alphaaric	1133	A996220-F	N	Fl Lo		932	Na	F4V
Beshavaram	1134	B426649-B	N	Ni		735	Na	M0V
Halik	1136	E332338-9		Lo Ni Po		932	Na	M1V M4V
Vishanerella	1202	E1005AA-8		Va		313	Ho	M6V
Inast	1210	A663469-7	N	Ni		912	Na	M0V
Cometary	1215	D110330-A		Lo Ni		734	Na	M7V
Dova's World	1213	X100440-9		Ni Va		903	Na	K4d
Wolden	1218	B4479A9-A		Hi In		215	Ga	M1V
Gateway	1220	AS62688-B		Ri Ni		822	Ga	K0V
Urel	1223	C88A999-A		Hi Wa		113	Ga	G6V M0V
Yar	1234	C8D3578-7		Ni Fl		700	Na	M1V
Falray	1240	C244686-8		Ag Ni		215	Na	M2V M4V
Danovan	1303	C79A5AA-9		Wa Ni		504	Ho	K4V
Hesh	1308	C46556A-A		Ag Ni		912	Ho	M0V
Luray	1310	B648369-9		Lo Ni		933	Na	F3V
Galvaren	1319	C748551-B		Ag Ni		612	Ga	K9V M2V
Tovren	1322	C879447-7		Ni		913	Ga	M8V
Medrealm	1327	B87679B-6		Ag		914	Na	K1V K9V
King	1330	E480345-8		Lo Ni De		804	Na	F4V
Whister	1338	B688327-B	N	Lo Ni		912	Vi	M5V
Gronegger	1339	D21356A-9		Ni Ic		813	Vi	M8V
Reppler	1404	EA538AC-9				215	Na	M0V M2V M8V
Kaskaria	1406	C6247AA-9				623	Ho	K0V K8V
Concord	1410	C6876AA-7		Ag Ni	R	900	Na	K0V
Tovis	1412	C664532-9		Ag Ni		510	Pl	G7V
Windfleet	1413	D779988-A		Hi In		310	Pl	F8V
Havary	1416	C553259-9		Lo Ni Po		812	Na	K0V
Riga	1423	D675887-8				810	Tr	G9V
Welmertins Station	1424	C7B5464-9		Ni Fl		712	Tr	M8V
Orage	1428	B420ADA-9		Hi Na In Po De		234	Na	A7V
Namitin	1432	C525340-7		Lo Ni		610	Vi	M5V
Clavaba	1436	C466459-4		Ni		911	Vi	K9V K9V
Therinth	1501	C8208FA-9		De Ni		812	Ho	F1V
Velan	1505	C87A7FA-5		Wa		110	Ho	K0V
Bospin	1508	D456459-9		Ni		100	Ho	M1V
Vosrin	1512	D87A989-B		Hi In Wa		723	Pl	G9V
Tash	1513	C968887-A		Ri		410	Pl	F5V
Foriv	1514	C772988-A		Hi In		912	Pl	G1V
Anderson	1519	CCC1210-B		Fl Lo Po		321	Na	F8V
Halversons Rocks	1520	C000898-A		Na As		712	Na	A2V
Nadia	1526	X747678-1		Ag Ni		902	Tr	G3V
Taravesh	1527	B799955-C	N	Hi In		124	Tr	K0V
Gaspar Belt	1530	C000684-A		Na As		712	Vi	M1V
Ariel	1531	C684584-7		Ag Ni		913	Vi	M6V
Plinth	1535	B553310-8		Lo Ni Po		913	Vi	K8V
Granth	1601	B8779FE-A		In Hi		910	Ho	F8V
Tarvad	1604	D6758FA-8				912	Ho	M0V M0V
Duresthan	1609	C6235FE-B		Po Lo		910	Ho	M7V
Ganyvar	1612	C766684-9		Ag Ni Ri		412	Pl	K1V
Anaxar	1613	C478861-A				912	Pl	G2V
Gavro	1615	E87A000-1		Lo Ni Wa		001	Pl	M9V
Taneriv	1617	C76A666-8		Ri Wa		914	Pl	G2V
Haro	1622	C669642-7		Ni Ri		421	Tr	M0V M0V
Paladin	1624	B757476-A		Ni		812	Tr	K9V K9V M9V
Drovinthic	1627	C865620-9		Ni Ri		122	Tr	G2V
Coralee	1629	C411764-9		Na		615	Vi	K3V
Junction	1633	C560236-A		Lo Ni De		112	Vi	F9V
Balaclaron	1637	A867989-A		Hi		414	Vi	G2V
Thanderbrac	1639	C150459-9		Ni Po De		210	Vi	M1V
Caladan	1706	D6737FA-9				915	Ho	G9V
Valkyr	1709	BA598FE-C				913	Ho	K1V
Quetzal	1715	C68299A-5		Hi		112	Pl	M3V
Lanu	1721	C410410-8		Ni		213	Na	M1V
Marina	1724	E77A669-7		Ni Ri Wa		712	Tr	K0V
Trindel	1725	B565989-C	N	Hi		214	Tr	K0V K3V M9d
Archipelago	1726	B78A657-A	N	Ni Ri Tr		516	Na	F8V
Umbrin	1731	C558445-9		Ni		912	Vi	K3V
Catanin	1736	E673000-9		Lo Ni Ba	A	012	Vi	K9V
Santee	1739	B777989-A		Hi In		214	Vi	M1V
Vanadia	1801	CA877FA-A		Fl		501	Ho	M0V M0V
Agaravand	1802	D66A7F9-9		Wa		711	Ho	K8V K9V
Duris	1807	C5596FA-8		Hi		911	Ho	M0V
Tristar	1815	E110436-A				200	Pl	G0V K2V K3V
Bremen	1818	B693632-A		Na		911	Pl	F1V
Viyard	1829	B76A788-A		Wa		311	Vi	G1V
Kever	1832	C558445-6		Ni		611	Vi	M0V M0V
Nederen	1834	E631754-9		Na Po		510	Vi	M7V
Mast	1835	C20088B-9		Na Va		910	Vi	F5V
Iceball	1837	E21A321-A		Lo Ni Ic		412	Vi	M9V
Hold-Your-Breath	1839	DACA324-B		Lo Ni Fl Wa		511	Vi	F3V

Shaneyfelt	1904	A7779FA-9	Hi In		313	Ho	G1V K8V
Darmin	1907	C68A3FA-A	Lo Ni Wa		601	Ho	M0V
Way	1909	C658341-4	Lo Ni		911	Na	M4V
Kaspar	1912	C766684-8	Ag Ni Ri		524	Pl	K1V
Asteron	1913	D855788-A	Ag		920	Pl	G8V
Colby	1917	B659866-A			610	Pl	K1V
Bonnhelm	1921	B650345-A	N De Ni Po		922	Na	F9V
Starbelt	1924	A000447-7	Ni As		911	Tr	K2V
Ashton	1926	B67377B-5			914	Tr	M0V
Red Gulf	1928	D637784-A			103	Na	M1V
Tangist	1930	C336256-3	Ni		802	Vi	K1V K1V
Holidin	1931	B220575-A	Ni Po De		113	Vi	F2V
Renquist	2002	CAA33FA-A	Lo Ni Fl		713	Ho	M0V
Klavien	2003	A7957FA-8	Ag Ni		901	Ho	K6V
Galvestar	2008	A778AAA-A	Hi In		122	Na	M1V
Prevarren	2010	C555555-A	Ag Ni		913	Pl	G2V
Samuelson	2014	C100476-A	Ni Va		914	Pl	M0V M0V
Lem	2016	C310888-A	Na		915	Pl	M1V
Tavarand	2017	C6396A8-5	Ni		902	Pl	K2V
Neopis	2020	A676789-A	Ri		421	Na	G5V
Desdemone	2022	C454033-A	Lo Ni		812	Na	M6V M6V
Caster	2035	C150459-9	Ni Po De		222	Na	A5V
Cloud	2037	D000200-A	Lo Ni As		510	Vi	M9V
Zoriantra	2101	C7778FA-A			713	Ho	K2V
Orcana	2105	C86A475-B	Ni Wa	A	914	Na	M0V
Tarkaan	2107	C473976-C	In		720	Na	M1V
Condominium	2112	C867A96-4	Hi		110	Na	K0V
Plavis	2113	A69899A-A	Hi In		214	Pl	G2V
Oceanis	2125	B67A799-7	Ri Wa		201	Na	K1V M0V
Agramenx	2127	D837897-5			815	Na	F6V
Flemington	2133	B472789-8			200	Na	M2V
Thane	2138	C999643-4	Ni		914	Vi	G1V
Cinder	2140	X710000-9	Lo Ni Ba De		011	Vi	F5d
Iosanillia	2202	X747678-1	Ag Ni		800	Na	K4V
Calliver	2214	C4357CC-6			401	Na	M3V
Trevannic	2219	E876740-9		A	904	Na	F5V
Vole	2222	C9919B9-A	In Hi		111	Na	F9V M0V
Hopewell	2224	D584800-1			712	Na	G1V
Paradise of El	2231	C757863-6			913	Na	F4V
Ravashar	2233	C5449CC-8	Hi In Po		823	Na	K1V
Shin	2235	C400102-A	Lo Ni Va		812	Na	M1V
Dlh-v'n	2304	B311320-B	Lo Ni Ic		922	Na	M0V M4V
Veel	2307	C624779-9			601	Na	K2V
Smuggler's Hide	2310	E978552-7	Ag Ni		423	Na	M6V
Freedom Bright	2312	C544585-8	Ag Ni		311	Na	F2V
Varan's Belt	2317	C000730-B	Na As		812	Na	M3V M6V M9d
Dolmen	2329	D942987-7	In		412	Me	K6V
Sinest	2337	B575886-9			924	Na	G8V
Fog	2401	E9B3531-8	Ni Fl		120	Na	F1V
Mung Sa We	2409	E853724-6	Po		414	Ak	M0V M0V
Hawk	2413	C765887-8	Ri		612	Na	G2V
Vestra	2415	A23477B-A	Ag		701	Na	M7V M8V
Polacci	2416	C687200-6	Lo Ni		612	Na	F4V G4IV
Dover	2423	A8999A6-9	Hi In		113	Na	G1V K1V M7V
Gravin	2424	E654100-8	Na Ni	A	902	Na	K9V M8d
Megucorp Alpha	2429	C77999A-9	Hi In		312	Me	M6V M7V
Waystation	2434	CS00749-A	De Va		410	Na	K7V
Picard's Belt	2440	C000510-A	As Ni		910	Na	F6V
Alistar	2503	C120555-A	Ni Po De		810	Na	K1V
Nng Min Sa	2506	B477976-B	Hi In		724	Ak	M2V
Nng Min Ha	2508	D454300-9	Lo Ni		622	Ak	M3V
Fastness	2520	E110772-A	Na		210	Sw	K2V
RoughandReady	2521	D789668-9	Ni Ri		712	Sw	G1V
Kenev	2527	D898114-5	Lo Ni		913	Na	M9V
Megucorp Beta	2531	C53999A-9	Hi In		203	Me	M8V
Sardinian	2531	E427457-5	Ni		914	Na	F1V
Red Grolland	2535	C511358-A	Lo Ni Ic		714	Na	M2V
Baretenit	2537	B629034-8	Lo Ni		801	Na	M5V M5V
Setnil Navarok	2539	C400265-A	Lo Ni Va		710	Na	M2V
X'kuur'qu'io Nu	2605	X747678-0	Ag Ni	R	713	Ak	M0V
Gneri Mu Nin	2609	C555555-9	Ag Ni		313	Ak	K0V
Lanadhu	2611	C223669-9	Na Ni Po		100	Ak	M8V K2d
Zora	2614	C748551-5	Ag Ni		600	Na	M2V K9V
Freehaven	2618	C624779-6			601	Sw	M9V M9V
Finestre	2624	D5A2003-9	Lo Ni Fl		514	Na	F8V
Randrell	2628	E980000-4	Ba De		111	Me	M0II
Athene	2629	B689657-9	Ni Ri		914	Me	K4V
Sardis	2630	A876999-B	In Hi		100	Me	G3V
Silveron	2635	E978552-6	Ag Ni		523	Na	M0V
Megas	2639	EA9A547-8	Ni Wa		724	Na	K3V
Drasheveen	2701	C230225-9	Lo Ni Po De		312	Na	G9V K1V M2V
Holbert	2704	E243442-4	Lo Ni Po		212	Na	M2V
Akeen	2708	B66A232-B	Ni Wa		912	Na	K0V
Hidden Booty	2716	E100000-6	Lo Ni Va Ba		613	Na	M8V M9d
Carlton	2720	B667754-A	Ag Ri		925	Sw	G5V
Freeport	2722	B646410-A	Ni		923	Sw	M0V
Goldstar	2725	B658300-A	Lo Ni		914	Na	G7V
Azuris	2727	B66A610-9	Wa		201	Me	F9V
Besarbian	2733	C534899-6			513	Me	M3V
Garther	2738	C536422-A	Ni		914	Na	M4V
Jh'nng Mu Nu	2806	C683104-9	Lo Ni		913	Ak	M0V M4V
Hespitar	2810	C446410-A	Ni		813	Ak	K2V
Coriander	2813	C223669-8	Na Ni Po		101	Na	M0V
Runner's Star	2817	C686654-9	Af Ni Ri		613	Sw	G4V
Pirate's Haven	2819	C775871-9			826	Sw	K3V K4V
Lucian	2823	C6A9124-9	Lo Ni Fl		711	Na	M8V
Parmentier	2824	D567669-8	Ag Ni Ri		825	Na	K0V
Lov Fennaden	2828	D682232-8	Lo Ni		613	Me	M4V
Kolan	2831	C757887-9			314	Me	G6V
Jasper's Ring	2836	DR00779-C			114	Na	M6V M7VI
Fartheron	2903	E564320-6	Lo Ni		423	Na	M3V
Gigas	2915	C577000-9	Lo Ni Ba		900	Na	M8V
Sandhaven	2918	B000830-A	As Na		322	Sw	M9VI
Kotar	2921	C554550-9	Ag Ni		824	Sw	G8V
Holande	2928	C534373-A	Lo Ni		900	Me	M1V
Rios	2937	C424664-7	Ni		322	Na	F2V
Castlemaine	2940	C230225-9	Lo Ni Po De		312	Na	K1V M6V
Duranel	3006	E32487B-9			101	Na	M0V M8d M8d
Coma	3010	E100586-7	Ni Va		423	Na	M0III F5d
Mneomon	3012	BA89537-B	Ni		924	Na	F8V
Golar	3024	C87A447-6	Ni Wa		903	Na	G8V M7V
Vulan	3029	C78866A-9	Ag Ni Ri		524	Re	F9V M7d
Akabar	3031	C76766B-9	Ri		824	Re	K8V K8V
Icestation	3034	C10A569-9	Ni Va Ic		911	Re	M7V
Njorni	3038	C651754-9	Po		432	Na	M3V M9d
Celeste	3040	C85A876-8	Wa Ri		311	Na	M4V M4V
Agarn	3102	B66A777-9	Ri Wa		712	Na	G2V
Tuckjohn	3105	D567200-7	Lo Ni		900	Na	M4V
Randolph	3108	C140899-A	Po De		112	Na	M5V
Boden	3109	C77A565-7	Ni Wa		612	Na	M0V
Banserada	3110	B512103-B	Lo Ni Ic		313	Na	M8V M9d
Emoress	3117	A66A779-9	N Ri Wa		310	Na	G3V
Hotemin	3121	D21356A-8	Ni Ic		111	Na	M3V
Frantest	3122	B66A736-7	N Wa		211	Na	M0V M1V
Quiestreen	3125	B48A677-9	Wa Ni Ri		600	Na	K2V
Plymar	3128	B554469-A	N Ni		910	Re	G9V
Kent	3131	D4346AC-7	Ni		111	Re	M8V
Barristar	3132	B964360-9	Lo Ni		511	Re	K7V
Trondelm	3137	C53A789-A	Wa		211	Na	M0V M0V M0V
Alechet	3201	C230225-9	Lo Ni Po De		310	Na	K1V M6V
Caterplan	3203	C140899-A	Po De		100	Na	M5V M7VI
Bern	3207	ACDA000-C	Ba Ni Fl		111	Na	A5V
Chloran	3213	C9C4100-B	Lo Ni Fl		901	Na	M3V
Drumhelda	3217	D110330-A	Lo Ni		732	Na	M7V M9d
Thipister	3219	B769436-A	Ni		223	Na	M0V
Grovelunda	3223	A439667-B	Ni		123	Na	F6V
Pashendelist	3226	C53786C-A			601	Re	K3V M4V M9d
Silest	3229	B99A76E-8	N		511	Re	G2V
Xabthar	3230	C643569-8	Lo Ni Po		301	Re	F3V M6d
Neomantel	3233	C65A769-A	Wa		211	Re	G9 K1V
Povan	3235	B430666-B	Na Ni Po De		723	Re	K4V
Hepler	3239	C687200-7	Lo Ni		921	Na	M0V

ALLEGIANCE CODES

Ga: Galian Federation
Ho: Hochiken People's Assembly
Pl: Plavian League
Tr: Trindel Confederacy
Vi: Viyard Concourse
Ak: Akeena Union
Sw: Swanfei Free Worlds
Me: Megusard Corporate
Re: Renkard Union

GATEWAY SYSTEMS

LORDS OF THUNDER: GATEWAY SECTOR LIBRARY DATA

A few of the more important systems within the Gateway Sector are listed and described below.

GALIAN FEDERATION

Gateway Prime (1220 AS62688-B): Capital of the Galian Federation, and nexus of a trade network which spans much of the sector. Gateway itself is described in greater detail elsewhere.

Salur (0921 B746989-A): A high-population, heavily industrialized world still largely dominated by the interstellar corporations that first organized the sector. Salurian Lines — an important transport, freight, and passenger starliner company — is headquartered here. The Salurian Naval base furnishes fleet defense for all of the Galian Coreward worlds, including Gateway itself. Salurian industries specialize in starcraft components and electronics, computers, and exotic composite materials.

Amberinth (0527 C785897-A): A pleasant, Earth-like world originally reserved for the estates of many of the wealthier magnates of the early corporate days of the sector. Amberinth has recently been opened to wholesale colonization and exploitation, however. Continuing legal problems have hampered development in areas where the Dastri, a humanoid, non-human race still guard their territorial domains with stone-age weapons.

Tharver (0528 B775985-9): Capital of the old Galian league, Tharver is one of the oldest of the sector's human-settled worlds. It was once the center of much of the corporate activity throughout the sector and is still the administrative center for many of the Federation's banks and major corporations.

Galvaren (1319 C748551-B): An agricultural world on the Galian border, its principal importance lies in the system's position as the first stop on the Gateway-Sardis Run. Unrest has swept several of the world's principal urban centers as a fanatic religious sect, the Sons of Sargon, seeks to gain control of the planet's political machinery.

TRINDEL CONFEDERACY

Trindel (1725 B565989-C): Capital world of the Trindel Confederacy. The largest city is an arcology called Rothton, a complex of towers over two kilometers high spanning the Arianus Straights between Malawar and Couloomb.

Taravesh (1527 B799955-C): Recently occupied by a Galian battlefleet under the command of Rear Admiral Jaime Marcus, this world is under martial law. It is one of the Confederacy's most important centers of industry and manufacturing. The occupation, carried out to prevent Viyard Concourse occupation, has brought relations between Gateway and Trindel to a new low.

Taravesh is an important source of fibron, an electrochemically grown material spun into superconducting filaments for use in computers and microelectronics.

VIYARD CONCOURSE

Coralee (1629 C411764-9): Until recently part of the Trindel Confederacy, Coralee is generally considered to be a captive government, occupied by Viyard forces during the Clovian War of 1098. The Coralee Question remained unsettled after the Peace of Farnoc ended hostilities, and the system was never formally ceded to the victorious Viyard Concourse.

Tensions remain high, and most urban centers are under martial law. Numerous popular liberation fronts have appeared and are carrying on a guerrilla war from bases hidden in the desert wilderness regions of the planet.

Gaspar Belt (1530 C000684-A): An asteroid belt important primarily as a mining and resource center. Gaspar itself is the large, ringed gas giant that serves as the system's principal fueling point. The refinery and storage facilities on Gaspar Eta, largest of the giant's satellites, were heavily damaged in a recent raid by mercenaries said to be hired by the Galians.

Catanin (1736 E673000-9): A world which, until five years ago, had a population of some 100,000 people. A plague of unknown origin appears to have wiped out the population, though there are reports of survivors hiding in the hills. It is possible that the disease, whatever it was, affected the minds of the survivors. There has been no contact with the world in five years. The system has been listed as the Concourse equivalent of an Amber Zone until a thorough investigation can be carried out.

PLAVIAN LEAGUE

A union of several smaller states located primarily in the Castra and Windfleet subsectors, with a total of twenty-one systems.

Prevarren (2010 C555555-A): Sole Plavian world in the Denkard Subsector, it is important primarily as a black market trade station with both the the Akeen Union and the Hochiken People's Assembly. Recent war with the Assembly over the Heptad Worlds made trade with Hochiken illegal, but a large number of independent merchants and smugglers continue a brisk underground trade via Duris (1807).

Heptad Worlds of Windfleet: Tovis (1412), Vosrin (1512), Ganyvar (1612), Windfleet (1413), Tash (1513), Anaxar (1613) and Foriv (1514).

Seven inhabited systems, formerly the Windfleet Concourse, now part of the Plavian League. They are currently recovering from a vicious interstellar war with the HPA, which claims them as part of the Assembly's empire. Plavian battlefleets are currently positioned within each system, and visitors are boarded and searched for evidence of contact with the People's Assembly.

Bremen (1818 B693632-A): Sub-capital of the Plavian League and location of the large, powerful Bremen Naval Base.

HOCHIKEN PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

Granth (1601 B8779FE-A): Capital of the Hochiken People's Assembly. A grim, gray world of industrially polluted air, steel cities and formidable, socialist architecture, it is the Imperial center of HPA military and expansionist ambitions. Military service is compulsory for all citizens between the ages of 16 and 50 (standard). The Public Law is enforced by a secret police known as the Special Service Bureau (SSB).

Valkyr (1709 BA598FE-C): A high-gravity world noted chiefly for its warrior class, the Valkyrs. Drawn exclusively from the world's ruling elite, the Valkyrs are extensively trained from childhood in combat and raiding techniques, sabotage, and special operations. The hot, thin air and high gravity has produced a strain of humans adapted to the harsh environment, stronger and with greater endurance than normal people. The Hochiken People's Assembly has been castigated in the past few years for conducting deliberate human genetic experiments on Valkyr in an attempt to produce a race of super warriors. Granth has consistently denied all such rumors, while at the same time refusing to allow outsiders to visit this world.

Visas and special passes to visit Valkyr are available only on Granth.

AKEENA UNION

A group of eleven systems covering parts of the Denkard, Lowton, and Forcett subsectors.

Akeen (2708): Capital of the Akeena Union, and homeworld of the minor non-human race known as the Akeed. A water world, Akeen possesses several large islands and numerous island chains, the home environment of the enigmatic alien culture. The Akeed themselves feed on minerals drawn directly from soil and water, and appear to be as happy living under the water as on the land. Though human contact with the Akeed occurs only on land or in space, it is believed that the race has an extensive marine culture. The extent of this culture, its tech level, and other accomplishments are unknown.

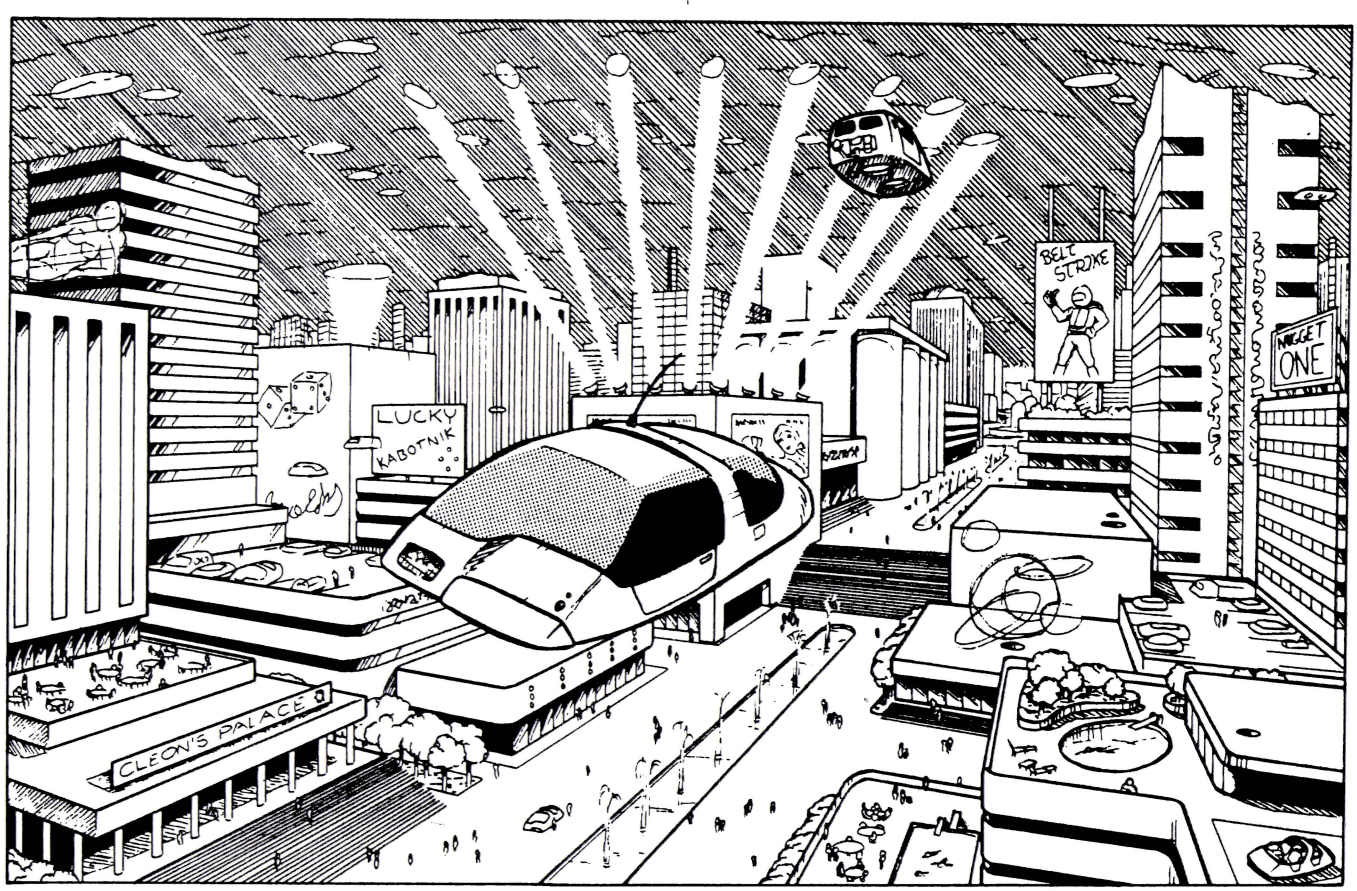
The population, government, law and tech level UWP codes refer to the human orbital colony called Sky, together with human enclaves on the planet's surface. The population of the Akeed is unknown, and their law and government systems are largely unintelligible to human observers. Their tech level, based on observations of their ship technology and electronics, is generally set at ten(A). They possess Jump-drive ships, but acquired them from humans early in the sector's history.

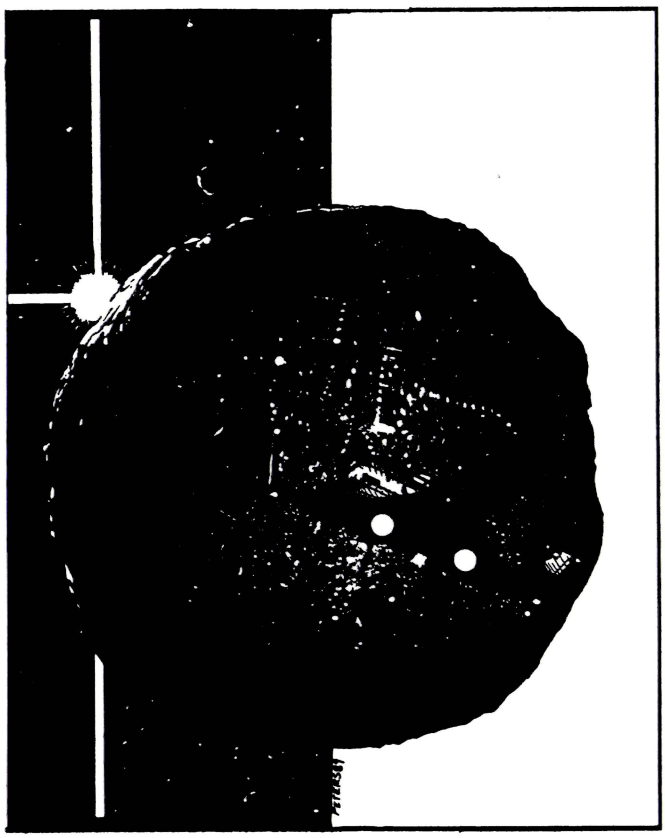
SWANFEI FREE WORLDS

A collective of nine worlds devoted, as one observer put it, to "uninhibited capitalism." Anything can be had for a price, and it is widely understood that the association's economy is largely derived from piracy.

Carlton (2720 B667754-A):

Capital and central system of the Free Worlds. It is a thriving world with a population of 92 million. The principal cities are Carlton Down and New Haven, both of which benefit by an almost complete absence of government interference with starport business.





MEGUSARD CORPORATE

A former union of industrial complexes and mining colonies still controlled by a handful of powerful interstellar corporations, chiefly United Megulon of Sardis.

Sardis (2630 A876999-B): Capital of the Megusard Corporate. An industrial, high-population world of sprawling, fog-shrouded cities and vast industrial complexes. The world's constitution has recently been suspended "for the duration of the emergency"—the increased border tensions with the neighboring, K'kree-ruled state — and citizens and visitors are subject to arrest and search. The government authorities are seeking to halt the illegal flow of arms through Sardis, arms destined for the Force Bravo forces training on Kolan.

Kolan (2831 C757887-9): A small, hot world known for its thick jungles and mist-shrouded, usually overcast skies. A genetics research company, Ralton Farina, has its headquarters and research laboratories here.

The world is also known as the reputed hideout for numerous mercenary bases and refugee camps involved in covert operations against the K'kree occupiers of the Renkard Union.

RENKARD UNION

Once a trader's union embracing some twenty worlds, the Renkard Union was recently absorbed by the much larger and more powerful Xuruk'xaar'keer!, the so-called "Xuruk Empire."

Silest (3229 B99A76E-8): Capital of the former Renkard Union, now under the direct rule of a K'kree clan. Though occupied by K'kree forces, enforcement of the new government's laws is carried out primarily by the Regulators, a paramilitary human force working for the K'kree and called "black jackets" by the populace at large.

Akabar (3031 C76766B-9): Once part of the Renkard Union and now answering to the K'kree invaders, Akabar is ruled by Regulator paramilitary forces acting under orders from Silest. K'kree vegetarian laws are strictly enforced, and K'kree naval forces frequently operate in-system. A stubborn guerrilla resistance continues to operate within the equatorial jungles of Akabar.

THE FOUR SUBSECTORS

The term "Four Subsectors" is frequently used within Gateway Sector to refer to Castra, Forcett, Ashton, and Riftin subsectors. Specifically, the term is used to refer to the various independent worlds in these subsectors, those not aligned with the Plavian League, the Trindel Confederacy, or the Megusard Corporate.

This region carries a particular notoriety for piracy and lawlessness. Within the past four months, three merchant liners have vanished — presumably taken by pirates — within the Castra and Ashton subsectors alone.

INDEPENDENT WORLDS

Over one hundred star systems within the Gateway Sector owe allegiance to no multiworld government at all. In some cases, these are relatively unimportant worlds, remote from centers of trade or government and not worth the effort or expense of developing or conquering them. In other cases, they have been able to maintain their independence through varying combinations of political astuteness and diplomacy, the twists and uncertainties of interplanetary politics, alliances, and powerful home defense.

A few of the more important of Gateway Sector's Independent Worlds are listed below.

Far Portal (0130 A238346-A): Also known as Gateway Portal, this system is important because it offers the only Jump-1 and -2 route into the Gateway Sector from neighboring Ley Sector. Most visitors to the Gateway Sector pass through Far Portal. Though the system does not belong to the Galian Federation, strong ties between this world and the Federation have existed since the days of the great interstellar corporations. The Galian worlds have greatly benefited through trade and taxation by occupying the only regular trade routes between the Gateway and Ley Sectors. Far Portal, like Gateway Prime, is an artificial construct, a space colony in orbit around a small, cold, ice-locked rocky body which is the only satellite of Toman, a swollen, Type III red giant. Several hundred people occupy research stations on the surface of the planet; the rest of the population — some 8000 — live and work in the orbital colony and in the attendant spaceport and space industrial facilities. Normally a prosperous place, business in Far Portal has declined sharply since the beginning of the Imperial Rebellion some four years ago.

Alphaaric (1133 A996220-F): An independent system in the Ariel subsector jointly managed by representatives of the

RUMORS

Spaceport bars, merc hiring halls, starport recreational areas, and various casual encounters such as taxi drivers and bartenders are always good sources of local gossip. This section provides the referee with choice rumors that may help propel the characters into new adventures, or carry them further in the current one. Rumors may be true or false, at the referee's discretion.

The following rumors may be encountered on Gateway, or on any of the other worlds of the Galian Federation

• Ever hear of Gravin? There's supposed to be a scientific expedition of some kind going out that way to look for a lost city. Lost city my great aunt! The word is there's treasure. Gold. Platinum. Jewels. Diamonds the size of your fist. 'Course, the GXF isn't talking about *that* part. . . .

• There's going to be big trouble off to trailing. The centaurs took over the Renkard Union about ten-twelve years back, and now they're making the move on the Megusards. I hear the Megusards are looking for military types out that way, and no wonder!

• I hear they're looking for mercs out Sardis way. If you're interested, go talk to this guy, Darvin Smith, up at the Regis Hotel.

• The egghead types are looking for security guards. Can you beat that? Something about a trek out in the boonies out Ashton way, looking for lost alien cities. I gather the natives are restless, and the domeheads need firepower!

• You hear the Plavians are looking for help? The Hochikers are rattling their cage again. Something big in the Heptad, an evacuation or something. You have a ship or military experience, I'll bet the Plavian Embassy could tell you who to talk to.

• Salurian Lines is hiring guns with shipboard experience. I hear they've been having a lot of trouble with pirates lately . . . three ships lost in the last four months!

• There's going to be real trouble with the Viyards. There was some kind of confrontation with them at a place called Alphaaric, and they've been stirring up things over in the Confederacy too! If you're looking for action, maybe you won't have to go too far to find it!

The following rumors may be encountered on Sardis, Kolan, or the spaceports of other worlds within the Megusard Corporate.

• Word has it that there's a major K'kree battlefleet hiding out at Akabar, snapping up human smugglers and such that come their way.

• There's a K'kree battlefleet at Akabar, and it's getting ready to hit Kolan. The K'kree have had enough of human mercenaries and their posturing at Kolan, and they're going to put an end to it once and for all!

• If you want to make some money, Raynan Tal is your man. I hear he's pretty well connected with some big shots on Carlton . . . and you know what *that* means. He's supposed to be looking for some good men with a fast ship.

• There's been some sort of secret deal worked out between the K'kree and the Sardis government. It's a sell-out. The K'kree are going to just move in and take over. Hey, a year from now, we'll all be dead or eating veggies!

• The K'kree are very interested in running down one particular human. They're not saying much about him, but he's supposed to be a small, skinny guy with a funny name. Always carries a little, locked trunk with him where ever he goes. You see the guy, there are people who'd pay well for the news, y'know?

• The centaurs are really in a dither. Seems someone stole something valuable from them. No, don't know what it's supposed to be, except they want it back, bad. Maybe it's a weapon or something.

• There's been some kind of really big find at a place called Gravin, out in Ashton Sector somewhere. Silver. Platinum. Jewels the size of your hand. Part of a treasure left behind by some lost ancient civilization.

• You know the liner, *Gateway Star?* Someone said she's smuggling guns into Sardis. Boy, that'll set things shaking! The authorities are cracking down, trying to put a lid on stuff like that while they make nice — nice with the centaurs!

The following rumors may be encountered on Carlton, Tavarand, Bremen, or at any of the pirate ports in the subsectors of Castra, Forcett, Riftin, or Ashton.

• Word is that there's something big in the works with the GSI . . . something aimed at shutting down the pirate strongholds in the Four Subsectors. Space! When are the bureaucrats gonna leave honest, space-faring businessmen in peace?

• The GSI has a major op going down in Carlton, something called Operation Nova. Word is they're looking for pirate bases in Castra.

• You hear about Murfo-the-Mouth? Guess he was too much of a mouth. They found him — what was left of him, anyway — on the plaza this morning. Word is he was a GSI snitch, and Raynan Tal decided to make an example of him.

• The centaurs are really going on the warpath. Someone stole something valuable from them. Probably not a weapon. It might be one of their perfume *objects d'art.* Maybe they'd offer a reward to the guy that brought it back.

• There's been some kind of really big find out in the Ashton Sector. Gold, they say. All kinds of rare metals, maybe even rare gems, too. Part of a treasure left behind by some lost ancient civilization. Some of the boys are getting together to find out where.

• The *Gateway Star* is smuggling guns into Sardis, millions of credits worth. Wait'll Raynan Tal hears about *that!*

• The word in the street is that the pirates have a contract out on a Plavian Admiral named Quintana. The price is supposed to be Cr750,000.

Galian Federation and by the system's own native, nonhuman civilization, the Faar. The class-A starport designates the human construct known as Faarview, an orbital colony/station circling Mashan, the system's primary gas giant.

Alphaaric is inhabited by the Faar, a highly advanced civilization which, for various reasons, has never bothered to develop jump drive or to explore beyond its own world. Human studies of the Faar are continuing. In the meantime, a brisk and highly lucrative trade in high-tech electronics, novelties, and recreational devices continues between Galian traders and the Faar Domains.

Neopis (2020 A676789-A): A rich world with a class-A starport, located just off the main interstellar route from Gateway to the Megusard Corporate. Colonized from neighboring Bonnhelm by wealthy emigrants seeking to escape Bonnhelm's severe desert conditions, it was repeatedly raided by pirate forces early in its history. Those raids forced Neopis to develop a strong system defense force which today is the world's principal export. Neopan jump carriers are frequently hired by commercial lines as escorts, especially on the Gateway-Sardis run. The system boasts an excellent class-A ship building and repair facility. Neopis was the site of an important victory over pirate forces in 1106. Over fifty ships belonging to the notorious Fellowship of Kotar were lured to Neopis by faked reports of rebellion and civil war. The Kotar warships jumped in to loot what should have been a fat and easy prize . . . and were ambushed by Neopan cruisers and a Plavian expeditionary force led by then-Rear Admiral Quintana. Only ten pirate craft escaped, and the Kotar Fellowship was never again a serious threat.

Orcana (2105 C86A475-B): A water world lying outside the recognized borders of the Hochiken People's Assembly. Tidally locked to its cool, red dwarf sun, Orcana is a chill planet with large ice caps, its world-girdling ocean kept liquid by currents circulating between the day and night sides, and by the tidal flexing of the planetary crust. Approximately 90,000 humans live on gigantic, sea-going factory complexes which harvest free-floating mats of *jimjistisen*, or waterweed, and process it for several off-world pharmaceutical companies who buy it for the manufacture of certain broad spectrum antibiotics.

The sea farmers' traditional independence is now being threatened by their powerful and acquisitive neighbors in the HPA. Hochiken ships have long used the system's four gas giants for frontier refueling purposes. They would like to fortify the system and create a large base — including military and industrial facilities — and that means bringing Orcana into the Assembly as a full member. So far, the farmers have refused even to meet with HPA representatives, and the HPA has threatened to blockade the system in order to prevent cargo vessels from arriving to pick up waterweed cargos. Too small to have its own ship-building program, the Orcana Collective has been hiring mercenaries and armed traders in order to protect their world.

Control of Orcana is vital for the Hochiken Assembly, which needs the world and neighboring Tarkaan to create a Jump-2 route between the two halves of the Assembly's empire.

Havary (1416 C553259-9): A largely unexplored world lying well off any of the main trade routes, the formidable nature of the native ecology has so far prevented large-scale exploration or exploitation of this world. The sole human colony is Fortress, a lone settlement at the spaceport consisting of 80 people, mostly scientists studying the planet's spectacularly diverse flora and fauna.

Anderson (1519 CCC1210-B): A research station in orbit around Anderson's World, a deadly high-gravity planet with an atmosphere of fluorine and chlorine compounds and seas of hydrofluoric acid. Its primary commercial use is as a way station on jump routes from the Galian Federation to the Plavian League and other destinations to trailing. Galeoceuticals Incorporated has reported completion of preliminary tests aimed at establishing robotic chemical plants on antigravity platforms within the exotic atmosphere of Anderson's World.

Picard's Belt (2440 C000510-A): A vast cloud of asteroids circles this F6 star in numbers so great the star itself seems lost in a thick, smokey haze. Several hundred asteroid colonies have been established in the outer fringes of the system, which sustains itself by mining various ores for export, primarily to the Viyard Concourse.

Of particular interest are the ruins, artifacts, and anomalies discovered on numerous planetoids within the belt. None can be identified, and the intelligence behind them is unknown. Examples include a featureless 20-cm sphere of unknown alloy and purpose, pyramidal buildings with no accessible entrances, and a 50-km asteroid which has been cored by some process which left only a ring of nickle iron with mirror-polished inner walls. It has been suggested that the artifacts are the product of an alien civilization inhabiting asteroids deeper within the Belt, but the theory remains unproven and speculative.

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NEWS BULLETINS

As with rumors, news bulletins provide the referee and players with information that will help color in the background of the adventure. Like all news releases, those presented here may be less than entirely factual, and they may actually cover deeper, more complex stories. Unlike rumors, they will rarely have a direct bearing on the characters, but they will serve to keep the players abreast of developments in the sector and may provide clues to employment or information they are seeking.

The referee may also use news service bulletins to generate additional subplots and adventures within his campaign.

The well-known Traveller News Service provides information which is disseminated throughout the Imperial region. In the more chaotic realm of peripheral sectors like Gateway, local censorship and disinterest are more likely to limit the flow of news, and a press release on, say, Gateway will probably not be picked up on a minor independent world somewhere in Riftin. News from police states such as the Hochiken People's Assembly will be heavily censored and sharply controlled, and it is unlikely to be picked up by any other news services within the sector.

As a rule, all news bulletins listed below can be encountered by player characters at any A- or B-class starport anywhere within Gateway Sector. Characters at C-class or smaller ports will hear only the news issued from that particular world or union of worlds. News releases from Granth in the Hochiken People's Assembly will be available only within the borders of the HPA.

Dates are not provided. The referee should put in her own dates to match the chronology of the campaign she is running. In general, each release from a specific dateline is intended to follow the preceding release.

GATEWAY PRIME/WINDFLEET (1220 AS62688-B)

¶ Border patrol ships in the Plavian League have noted an increase in Hochiken activity, particularly in the worlds of the Heptad. Ω

GATEWAY PRIME/WINDFLEET (1220 AS62688-B)

¶ The Gateway Ministry of Defense has announced that talks with the Viyard Concourse have broken down over the future of the independent worlds lying between the two states.

¶ Speaking at a press conference at Northport today, Supreme Minister Havalas said that relations with the Viyards have reached an all-time low. Viyard militancy and the continuing dispute over trade with Alphaaric were cited as sticking points in the dispute.

¶ Havalas noted that the Galian-Viyard peace has been uneasy ever since the Clovian War ended twenty years ago. Ω

GATEWAY PRIME/WINDFLEET (1220 AS62688-B)

¶ Pirate activity in the Four Subsectors has been broken. In a prepared statement, Marshal Victor Johanssen today said that "our policies of containment and economic incentive have born fruit at last. The pirate nuisance in Castra and elsewhere is definitely on the decline."

¶ Representatives of the Gateway Merchants' Guild could not be reached for comment. Ω

GATEWAY PRIME/WINDFLEET (1220 AS62688-B)

¶ A spokesman for Salurian Lines today announced with regret the loss of the subsidized liner *Arkady*, en route from Gateway to Sardis. The liner is believed to have vanished somewhere between Neopis and Dover.

¶ Arkady is the fourth Salurian Lines starship to be lost in the region in as many months. Ω

GATEWAY PRIME/WINDFLEET (1220 AS62688-B)

¶ There is no truth to the rumor that a fabulous treasure has been uncovered on a world in Ashton Sector, the Gateway Xenoarchaeological Foundation announced today.

¶ "I can't imagine where these rumors got started," Foundation spokesperson Lydia Sanders announced at her office in Gateway. "We've got expeditions out at a dozen different sites right now. I don't even know which one this treasure was supposed to have been found at."

¶ Unconfirmed reports have suggested that a GXF archaeological expedition uncovered the treasure in a fabulous city of ruins somewhere in Ashton subsector last month. Ω

BREMEN/CASTRA (1818 B693632-A)

¶ Grand Admiral Lucius Quintana announced today that pirate activity within the Castra Subsector has grown worse, not better.

¶ "Everybody in the sector's trying to go it alone," Quintana said. "If we don't do something pretty soon, it's all going to fall apart." Quintana then blasted the Bremen government for doing nothing.

¶ "There's very little we can do," a government spokesperson at Government House in Bremenport said, on condition of anonymity. "The Navy's being held on a leash in case the Hochikers try something. In my opinion, it's the pirates who are the real problem." Ω

BREMEN/CASTRA (1818 B693632-A)

¶ The Plavian Supreme Military Command announced with regret today the death of Grand Admiral Lucius Quintana, of heart failure. Quintana was 58.

¶ "He was outspoken and often critical of the government," a spokesman for the PSMC said today. "But he was brilliant. He will be sorely missed." Ω

BREMEN/CASTRA (1818 B693632-A)

¶ War fever grips the Plavian League.

¶ "War near," Grand Archos says.

¶ Hochiken People's Assembly ambassador demands Hochiken control of Heptad.

¶ New demands by the Hochiken People's Assembly during the past week have resulted in the increased deterioration of relations between the two states. HPA diplomatic representatives in Bremenport have demanded that the seven star systems of the Heptad Cluster, now administered as associate worlds of the Plavian League, be ceded to the Hochiken Assembly by formal treaty. Grand Archos Stanis Ladislav has refused HPA demands and threatened to break diplomatic ties with the Assembly.

¶ Unconfirmed reports of HPA warship maneuvers at Duresthan and Valkyr continue to circulate among observers within the Heptad. Defense forces throughout the Heptad were put on special alert. Ω

BREMEN/CASTRA (1818 B693632-A)

¶ Anti-Hochiken rioting broke out for the third straight day in Vambliss, Grolman, Bremenport, and other major cities on Bremen, local news services reported today. Martial law was declared within hours of the announcement.

¶ A government spokesperson announced the situation was under control. Ω

BREMEN/CASTRA (1818 B693632-A)

¶ Hochikers raid Tovis.

¶ Government spokesmen today announced that a raidfleet of the Hochiken People's Assembly attacked Tovis (1412) in a brutal surprise attack. Meshical, the planet's largest city, was seriously damaged, and reports indicate that the total number of casualties may exceed 50,000.

¶ This just goes to show what kind of monsters we're dealing with," Vice Admiral Gloval of the Plavian Sixth Fleet, announced from his headquarters in Bremenport. "These [deleted] could do anything!" Ω

BREMEN/CASTRA (1818 B693632-A)

¶ Hochikers raid Vosrin.

¶ Government spokesmen today announced that a Hochiken raidfleet attacked Vosrin (1512) in a brutal surprise attack. Information on casualties and damage has not been released, but the figures are expected to be high. Vosrin is a water world with few cities or surface installations.

¶ The government denied rumors circulating in the capital that an evacuation of high-ranking and wealthy citizens from Vosrin is being planned. Ω

GRANTH/ATOON (1601 B8779FE-A)

¶ Our Beloved Leader made a speech today at the Great Hall of the Revolutionary People's Heroes. "It is time for the People to look to the future, to reach out and grasp their destiny," the Beloved Leader said.

¶ The complete text of our Beloved Leader's speech has been distributed for compulsory public viewing.

¶ Hail our Beloved Leader! Ω

GRANTH/ATOON (1601 B8779FE-A)

¶ The Directory of Racial Destiny (DRD) has issued a directive calling for all citizens between the ages of 16 and 20 standard to register for special duty to the state.

¶ Special training cadres have been directed to report to transport centers for further instruction, equipment issue, and field maneuvers.

¶ Hail our Beloved Leader! Ω

SARDIS/RIFTIN (2630 A876999-B)

¶ The Government today issued a proclamation declaring a special state of emergency. Special legislation has been enacted enabling the government to search and seize ships in port without warrant.

¶ "The Corporate is being overrun by lawless mercenaries and brigands," Rafred Franches of the Ministry of Public Safety announced at a press conference at the planetary capital. "This measure is being enacted to prevent an incident which could bring on full-scale war with our neighbors."

¶ The Megusard Shipworkers' Union issued a formal protest to the measure, but the organization's leaders were not available for comment. Ω

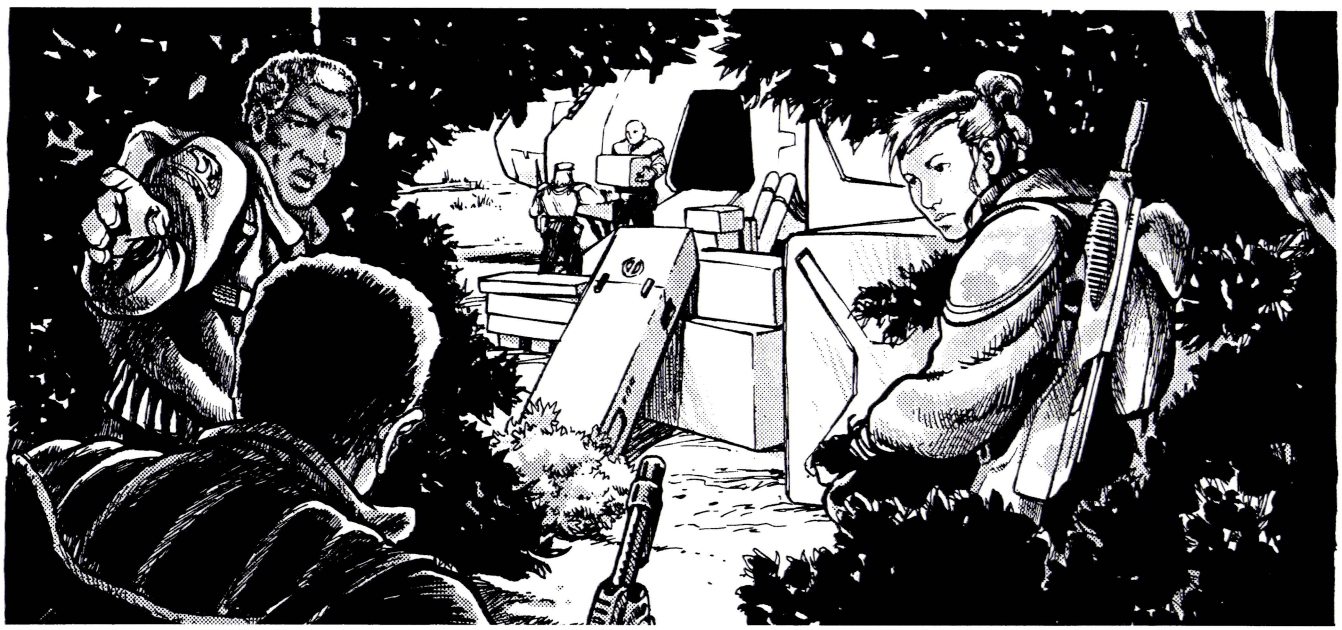
SARDIS/RIFTIN (2630 A876999-B)

¶ K'kree battlefleet raids Kolan.

¶ In an announcement issued by the Department of the Military, Sardis government officials admitted that K'kree warships entered the Kolan system and seized three vessels operating in the vicinity of Kolan. Two of the vessels were later released. One, reportedly the *Lanadhu Maru*, a freighter of Carlton registry, has been reported missing. Ω

CASTRAN MARAUDERS

LORDS OF THUNDER: PIRATES AND PIRATE BASES



Mike Vilardi

The idea of space pirates preying on the starlanes has become something of a cliché, but the fact remains that piracy will always exist where the means and motivation make it possible.

Piracy became a significant problem in Gateway Sector beginning about three hundred years ago and was, in fact, the proximate cause of the break-up of the old Galian League. Pirate fleets operating out of hidden bases within what came to be known as the Four Subsectors brought commerce to a virtual standstill across the entire region.

Their success was in a very real sense their own undoing, since trade through the region — hence rich targets — faded away after the collapse of the Galian League. Many former pirates settled on the worlds of Swanfei, which even today have the reputation for being wild and lawless.

For a time, piracy was on the decline. Powerful navy fleets, especially Plavian forces operating out of the Bremen Navy Base, patrolled the Four Subsectors and escorted merchant shipping in the region. A great deal of the motivation for piracy is lost when the targets are no longer defenseless.

In recent years, the situation has changed once more. Increased tensions between the various star nations have brought most of the sector to the brink of war. The Plavian League, in particular, has been concentrating on the threat to its coreward borders from the Hochiken People's Assembly and the fighting in the Heptad Cluster, leaving few units available for escort duty in the Four Subsectors. Meanwhile, the K'kree encroachment into Gateway Sector space has created new opportunities for the pirate raiders of the Castra and Ashton subsectors.

Marauder History

The Castran Marauders first appeared among the Swanfei Free Worlds twenty years ago. It is believed they were an offshoot of the now defunct Fellowship of Kotar, which was crushed in a major naval engagement at Neopis in 1106. Striking from well-hidden bases throughout the Four Subsectors, the Castran Marauders have hit merchant shipping, passenger liners, robot freighters and ore transports, even small warships. On more than one occasion they have hit worlds as well. In 1113 a Marauder fleet attacked Vole, one of the worlds on the Gateway-Sardis Run, and in 1115 they raided Dolmen in the Megusard Corporate, escaping with several hundred million credits' worth of light industrial machinery and petrochemicals.

By far the majority of trade within the Swanfei Free Worlds and among the surrounding independent star systems is dependent on piracy, with plundered merchantmen cargos or booty from raided cities appearing on the market on Carlton, Vestra, or even Dover within weeks of being taken.

Marauder Strength

The exact number of warships and transports in the service of the Castran Marauders is unknown. Indeed, many ships operating within the Four Subsectors may be pirate vessels only occasionally, with their owners joining in a raid or an ambush during times of economic need. Merchant captains and ship owners may ply the starlanes on legitimate business for months or years at a time, but when a special opportunity reveals itself, one or more pirate leaders will recruit a fleet and organize the raid.

At any given time, pirate forces within the Four Subsectors are estimated to number between 300 and 500 ships, most of them equivalent to Type J Seekers or Free Traders in size and armament. A "regular navy" is believed to exist, consisting of heavier armed freighters and occasional military vessels such as mercenary cruisers and close escorts. The pirate vessels have few, if any, capital ships, though it is believed that the Castran Marauders could at need summon the regular naval vessels of several worlds such as Carlton and Vestra. Usually, however, pirate raiders rely on stealth, surprise, and speed to strike their weakly armed or unprotected quarry and escape before effective retaliation can be mounted.

In addition to ships, large numbers of men can be mustered on short notice on any of the Swanfei Worlds or the surrounding independent systems. Operating as mercenaries, these men and women supply their own arms and equipment. A rough form of seniority, based on years of experience, is used to establish rank and the size of each man's share at the end of an operation.

It should be emphasized that the pirate raider fleets are assembled for specific operations, then disbanded. Even their "regular navy," if it in fact exists, must be scattered among a dozen different worlds and is brought together into a single force only when needed. Small squadrons of system defense vessels may be employed full-time to guard pirate bases, however.

Pirate Bases

Pirate vessels need servicing, repair work and maintenance; pirate crews need ports for rest and recreation, and a place to spend their prize shares. Each band has its own preferred bases. The Castran Marauders have several, well-hidden in systems throughout the Four Subsectors.

These bases are not active at all times. Often, when a particular operation is being planned, a base near the operation area is activated, with merchantmen bringing in crews and maintenance personnel. The vessels of the raidfleet assemble at that base, then carry out their mission. Afterward, they rendezvous back at the base, distribute the loot, and disperse. The base is then shut down and left unoccupied, to be used again at some future date.

The worlds near these bases are not shut down of course, but they do tend to be the kind of free-living, rough-and-ready frontier ports where no questions are asked, and the law either is nonexistent or easily purchased. Most of the independent worlds of the Four Subsectors are such places, and the nine systems of the Swanfei Independency comprise an entire, multistellar government based on the pirates' ideas of free enterprise.

Typically, pirate bases are hidden among the asteroids of a given system. They may be constructed within caverns hollowed out of an asteroid, or they can be large space stations or free-orbit colonies. In either case, they rely on the sheer number of bodies in a typical asteroid belt for cover. When unknown ships jump in-system, radio silence and ECM are used to full effect to create the impression that the base is simply another chunk of tumbling rock. Pirate vessels entering the system, once it is clear that they are not being followed, are homed into the base by tightly beamed, coded radio pulses.

Since it is impossible for a pirate-hunting fleet to examine every body in a typical asteroid belt, the bases are relatively safe from casual inspection. Pirate hunters rely on informers and on light lag to identify possible bases.

OPERATION NOVA

The Galian Stellar Intelligence Service (GSI) is working on a highly secret, covert operation designed to flush out and destroy the pirate menace once and for all. Code named *Operation Nova,* it calls for volunteer teams to infiltrate the pirate ranks, discover the location of their fleets and bases, and communicate the information to GSI or naval forces. High on the GSI's list is information which will lead to the capture of Raynan Tal . . . or his assassination.

The GSI is actively recruiting personnel with military or scout backgrounds who can play the part of pirates. Preference is given to newcomers to the sector, people unknown to the pirate spies which have certainly infiltrated Gateway's government and corporate infrastructure. These characters will be given money and covers which will enable them to travel to the Swanfei Free Worlds — a notorious center for pirate recruiting — where they may be able to contact pirate forces. Also possible would be a set-up whereby the characters fake a hijacking in order to gain the pirates' attention and respect. Still another method would be for the characters to engage in a covert gunrunning operation into the Megusard Corporate in hopes of encountering Raynan Tal along the way.

Once they are working as part of a pirate operation, they are to keep a low profile and their eyes open. Sooner or later, they will be taken to one of the secret bases known to exist somewhere within the Four Subsectors. The characters will have to use their wits and powers of observation in order to determine the base's location.

After a period of time, the characters will be able to visit one of the Free Worlds for R&R. At that time, they will endeavor to connect with a GSI contact, "Murfo-the-Mouth," or an NPC like him. Information they have gathered on pirate operations — the locations of bases, the numbers of ships and troops seen, details on plans for future operations, any information at all on personnel or morale, the location of pirate leaders such as Tal — all should be passed on to the GSI contact.

Referee's Information: With enough hard information, the Galian Federation Navy will mount a hunterfleet strike against pirate lairs.

The exact course of events will depend on how the adventure plot has unfolded to this point. The characters may hijack a ship of their own and escape, or manage to signal naval forces and wait for a rescue. The referee should plan things so that the final action will take place at Trevannic, where the characters will have the opportunity to uncover information not related to pirate activities . . . but of supreme importance to the course of the Gateway campaign.

The Pirate Hunters

Several governments in Gateway Sector are keenly interested in shutting down the pirate menace once and for all. Pirate raids have already taken a fearful toll of ships, lives, and commerce; and as war tensions mount within the sector, it is becoming more and more difficult to divert enough ships to mount effective escorts for merchant convoys.

The most effective tactic evolved thus far is hunterfleets, navy squadrons assembled to enter suspected pirate systems, find their bases, and destroy them. Without bases, the pirates have no place to service their ships, store supplies and munitions, or repair damage. Also, hunterfleet tactics spread fear among pirate crews and among the populations of worlds which harbor pirates. This has the effect of making the pirate bands more cautious, and reducing the number of raids.

Typically, a hunterfleet drops into a suspect star system some distance out from the habitable zone. Because of the limitation of the speed of light, the effect known as *light lag* can be used. If pirate vessels are operating near a hidden base in the system, the neutrino radiation released by their fusion power plants will have been spreading outward at the speed of light for as long as they were there. When the hunter ships drop in-system, the neutrino and other radiation heralding their arrival will take time to reach the pirates and warn them; the hunters will have time, anywhere from minutes to hours, before their quarry is aware of the intruders.

For example, if a hunterfleet leaves Jump Space 10 AUs from a pirate asteroid, the newcomers will be able to immediately register whatever was happening near the base some eighty minutes earlier, but it will be eighty minutes *more* before the pirates are aware of their presence.

Pirates are aware of light lag too, of course, and generally operate full-time under radio silence and with ECM on. Still, it is virtually impossible to effectively screen the neutrino emissions of fusion power plants short of powering down, and light lag gives the hunters time to spot pirate activities before they can switch off . . . "playing rock," as pirate jargon describes it.

The only other tactic possible would be for the pirates to

have armed ships or so-called sentinel mines which could detect and attack intruders almost as soon as they appear. While popular with holovid entertainment series, the sheer volume of space involved defeats this notion. The surface area of a sphere with a radius of 10 AUs is over 3.5×10^{20} square kilometers; unless the pirates are able to deploy billions of spacecraft or quadrillions of warheads — obvious impossibilities — the chances that an intruder would emerge from Jump close to a waiting pirate sentry vessel are extremely slender . . . all the more so since the whole point of piracy is to make a profit!

Pirates do often mine or patrol gas giants in the outer system which might be used as refueling points by incoming fleets. In general, however, they rely on the volume of a typical asteroid belt, the sheer number of unremarkable chunks of rock and ice within it, plus stealth and luck, to shield them from discovery.

Spotting bases and ships as a specific task is described elsewhere in this source material, under the heading *Operations.*

Anti-pirate Operations

Among the various interstellar governments of the sector, the Galian Federation has taken the lead in anti-pirate operations. Widespread piracy can be blamed for the fall of the Galian League several hundred years ago, and the modern Gateway government takes the problem very seriously.

Until recently, the Plavian League had also targeted the pirate bands for extermination, but this has changed with the rise of tensions between Plavis and the Hochiken People's Assembly to coreward. For many years, the Plavians have operated jointly with the Galians to hunt down and destroy pirate bases, and their large naval base at Bremen was an ideal port from which such expeditions could be mounted. The recent death of Admiral Quintana — a dedicated pirate hunter — may have ended Plavian involvement in anti-pirate operations, at least for the foreseeable future. There are signs that pirate activities are on the rise again, now that the Plavians are involved elsewhere.

The Galians continue to mount extensive anti-pirate operations, primarily in order to protect the vital Jump-2 spacelane known as the Gateway-Sardis Run. To this end, numerous Galian Federation ships have been detailed to make the Run as escorts. Others have been organized into hunterfleets which are searching for pirate bases and activities within the Four Subsectors. The most noted Galian pirate hunter is Admiral Chrisfeld Blain, who operates out of Gateway.

To date, there have been several sharp clashes, but no significant results. Galian warships have been operating out of the large naval base at Bremen (1818), but the treaty which has allowed them to do so is up for renegotiation. With the threat of full-scale war with the Hochiken People's Assembly, it is quite possible that the treaty will not be renewed.

There are rumors circulating throughout the Four Subsectors that the pirates themselves have been seeking to sabotage treaty negotiations . . . and even that it was they who assassinated Admiral Quintana.

The Gateway-Sardis Run

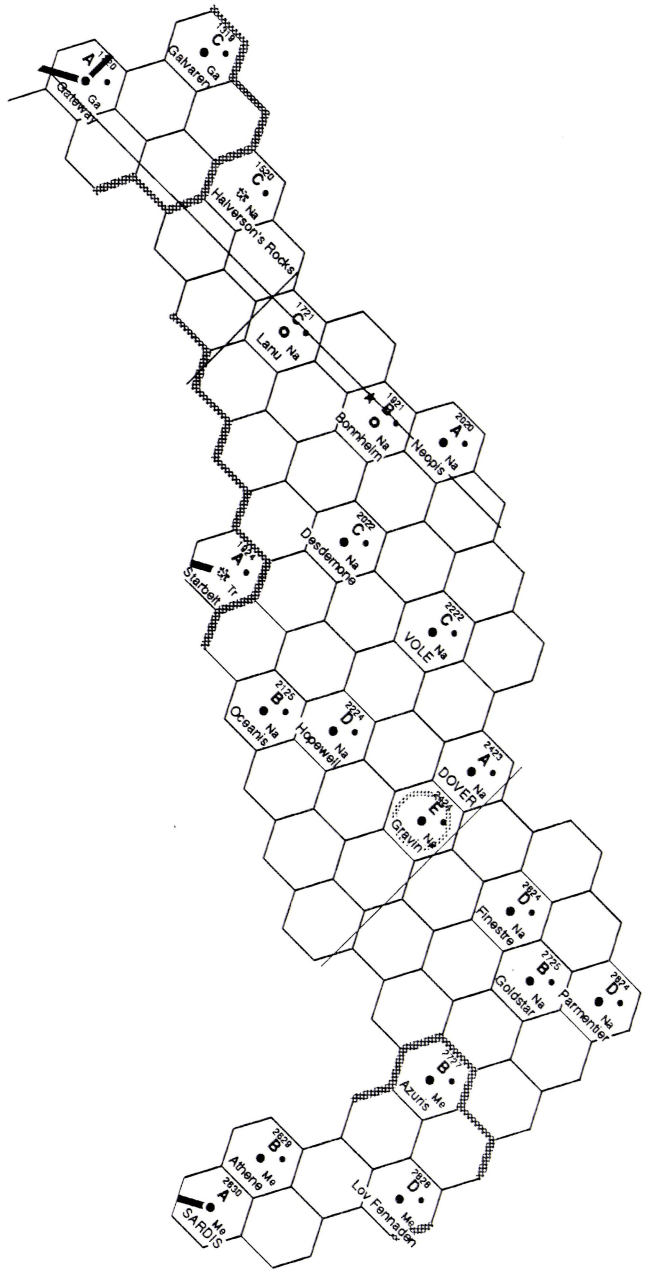
Numerous lanes of commerce exist among the various stars and governments of the Gateway Sector, but one in particular has gained special notoriety during the past century. The Gateway-Sardis Run is the name for the Jump-2 route which extends from Gateway (1220) to Sardis (2630), connecting fourteen systems along the way.

By making extensive use of independent star systems, the Run links the Galian Federation and the Megusard Corporate without crossing the borders of other star nations, thereby avoiding political entanglements. Unfortunately, this also means a greater likelihood of pirate attack in regions where interstellar governments cannot offer protection.

WORLDS OF THE GATEWAY-SARDIS RUN

The following systems lie along the Gateway-Sardis Run, beginning with Gateway itself.

Gateway	1220	AS62688-B	Ri Ni	822 Ga K0V
Galvaren	1319	C748551-B	Ag Ni	612 Ga K9V M2V
Halverson's Rocks	1520	C000898-A	Na As	712 Na A2V
Lanu	1721	C410410-8	Ni	213 Na M1V
Bonnhelm	1921	B650345-A N	De Ni Po	922 Na F9V
Desdemone	2022	C454033-A	Lo Ni	812 Na M6V M6V
Vole	2222	C9919B9-A	In Hi	111 Na F9V M0V
Dover	2423	A8999A6-9	Hi In	113 Na G1VK1VM7V
Finestre	2624	D5A2003-9	Lo Ni Fl	514 Na F8V
Goldstar	2725	B658300-A N	Lo Ni	914 Na G7V
Azuris	2727	B66A610-9	Wa	201 Me F9V
Lov Fennaden	2828	D682232-8	Lo Ni	613 Me M4V
Athene	2629	B689657-9 N	Ni Ri	914 Me K4V
Sardis	2630	A876999-B N	In Hi	100 Me G3V



Encounters on the Gateway-Sardis Run

Traveller player characters trying to get from Gateway to the other side of the sector, whether their destination is Sardis, Gravin, or the pirate worlds of Swanfei, will almost certainly find themselves on the Gateway-Sardis Run, either aboard a commercial liner or following the Jump-2 route in their own starship.

The referee may use the following encounter table while the characters' ship is making the run. She should have the players roll once on the table as soon as their ship comes out of Jumpspace, and again every four hours for as long as the ship is in-system and not actually docked at a world or starport.

The following DMs should be applied to each roll, to take into account the proximity of pirate bases, the size of the local starport, and the proximity of naval bases.

Influencing Factor	DM
System is spinward of Bonnhelm (1921)	-2
System has class A or B starport	-1
System has navy base present	-2
System is Desdemone (2022)	+2
System is Vole (2222)	+3
System is Dover (2423)	+1
System is Finestre (2624)	+3
System is Goldstar (2725)	+2

Every 4 hours while the ship is travelling in-system, add the appropriate modifiers into a single plus or minus DM and apply it to a single 2D roll on the following table.

2D	Encounter
-2 or less	Out-system naval forces
-1 to 0	System naval forces
1 to 2	Commercial convoy
3	Commercial vessel
4 to 9	No encounter
10+	Pirate vessels

Encounter Results

The following paragraphs describe the possible encounters.

Out-system naval forces: The characters detect 1D warships from out-system. They are part of a pirate-hunting patrol and, at the referee's discretion, may be from the Plavian League, the Galian Federation, or a mixed fleet from both governments. At either Finestre or Goldstar, it is also possible that the ships are naval vessels of the Megusard Corporate. In this event, they will be searching for independent merchants who might be attempting to smuggle weapons to Force Bravo on Kolan.

The hunterfleet is searching for pirate activity in the system and will hail the characters' vessel if its IFF does not show it to be a regular commercial vessel (such as a Salurian Lines' liner). Unless the characters can produce the proper authorization (such as a code given them by Jollynnstar Enterprises or the GSI), they will be ordered to cease acceleration while military personnel board and search their ship. Contraband cargo may be seized, though real or forged documents (such as those provided by Adam Lee) may prevent this. Boarding officers may also be susceptible to bribery.

System naval forces: The characters detect 1D warships belonging to the local system navy. At the referee's discretion, these may be anything from armed merchantmen (themselves scarcely distinguishable from pirates) or system defense boats to major warships. Note that worlds of tech level 9 (such as Dover and Finestre) will not have jump-capable starships.

The ships are patrolling their system and will, at the referee's discretion, hail the characters' vessel if it is not a regular commercial vessel such as a Salurian Lines passenger ship. They will not board or fire upon the characters' ship, however, unless invited to do so by the PCs (the PCs attack, flee, or perform some other suspicious behavior).

Commercial convoy: The characters detect a convoy consisting of 1D + 2 (3 to 8) merchant ships escorted by 1D - 2 (1 to 4) warships. The size and armament of the convoy vessels is up to the referee.

The warship(s) will investigate the characters' vessel if it is not a regular commercial ship such as a Salurian passenger liner. However, they will not board or attack them unless the player characters open fire on or otherwise threaten the convoy first.

Commercial vessel: The characters detect a commercial vessel. The identity is determined by the referee. It may be a local system transport — anything from a robot ore barge to an interplanetary cargo freighter — or it could be an interstellar freight or passenger liner following the Gateway-Sardis Run.

In any case, it will be suspicious of independent merchantmen (such as the characters' Far Trader) and may fire upon the characters or attempt to flee if it is threatened.

No encounter: Self-explanatory. The characters detect nothing new, though vessels picked up through an earlier roll may still be within detection range.

Pirate vessels: Contact! The characters detect 1D pirate vessels. Size and weaponry of each pirate vessel is at the referee's discretion, but it can be anything from an armed merchantman (such as a Far Trader identical to the players' own) to the *Vengeance*, Raynan Tal's 800-ton mercenary cruiser.

The pirates will almost certainly attempt to force the players' ship to surrender, at which point they will send a boarding party across. They may attack and attempt to destroy the players' ship if there is reason to believe it is part of a pirate-hunting force such as those employed by *Project Nova.*

REFEREE'S EYES ONLY: Pirates and the Adventure Plot

The referee may introduce the Castran Marauders into the adventure via any of several ways.

• **As a problem along the way:** Player characters travelling to the Megusard Corporate for any of various reasons may be threatened along the way by pirate attack. Pirates may also attack the xenoarchaeological party on Gravin, Trevannic, or other worlds, or the passenger liner which the characters have been hired to protect.

Such encounters should be resolved in the usual way, with the referee using pirate raiders to provide a bit of excitement and combat as the players carry out their mission.

At some point in the adventure, if the characters are not working as pirates (either literally or in disguise) they may be captured by pirate forces and taken to a secret base in the moon of Trevannic (2219). This will give them an opportunity to discover the Droashav homeworld for themselves, escape with the news, lead a hunterfleet to Trevannic to defeat the pirates, and be on hand to prevent a K'kree invasion of the system. (see: *Saving The Planet.)*

• **As the goal of the characters' mission:** Player characters hired by the GSI as part of Operation Nova will be interested in tracking down the pirates in order to discover one or more of their secret bases. The information will enable the Galian Federation

to assemble a powerful hunterfleet which it will use to destroy the Marauder bases.

This plot will constitute an adventure in itself, as the players make contact with pirates on Carlton or elsewhere, join them, and learn their secrets. There are numerous ways in which this mission can be carried out. One possibility is that the players are transported to the pirate system without being told where it is. While at that world, they see enough (such as the color of the star or the fact that the base is hidden in a moon orbiting an earthlike world) that they can figure out the world's identity through some research with a library computer, then report the base location to their GSI contact.

As undercover agents, the players may discover Trevannic as one of the pirate strongholds and, in the process, learn about the Droashav. The resolution should involve the summoning of a hunterfleet, the elimination of the pirates, and the rescue of the planet. (see: *Saving The Planet.)*

• **As part of a larger plot:** The player characters may find themselves involved with pirates as they begin running guns across the Megusard Corporate border. Pirate forces under Raynan Tal are engaged in the same business, and the players may find themselves working with the pirates without actually joining them.

With this version of the plot, the characters may find themselves in a position to take over the entire pirate apparatus in the Trevannic system as they outfit it for gun running into Megusard. In this scenario, the player characters might find themselves responsible for organizing a pirate fleet to defend Trevannic against the K'kree battlefleet when it appears.

Whatever path the referee and the players take, it should lead the adventurers one way or another to the world of Trevannic and put them in contact with the pseudoreptilians called Droashav. The players should be able to pick up enough clues here to allow them to link the Droashav with the G'naak of K'kree legend. This is crucial to resolving the overall plot of this campaign.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION: The Pirate Bases

This information is for the referee's eyes only and should be revealed to the players only as their characters uncover it in the course of the adventure. The players should be allowed to figure out for themselves the location of a world, rather than have the information given to them. In other worlds, they may be taken by pirates to one or more of these worlds, but the pirates probably will not tell them where they are!

Each world description below is followed by a clues section. This lists information which the player characters should be able to see for themselves during their stay on the world. They can later use library computers or astrogational research to puzzle out each world's location.

Varan's Belt (2317 C000730-B): Approximately 82 million people live among the thickly strewn planetoids of this system. The only bodies in the system are the Belt, occupying the innermost planetary orbit, and two gas giants and their moon systems. The principal legitimate settlement within the Belt is a large (900 km diameter) asteroid known as Smith's Ego (D000530-B), which serves as the administrative and trade center for the belt. Thousands of other settlements are scattered throughout the belt, ranging in size from city-sized domed colonies housing over a hundred thousand people to isolated stations housing only a handful of miners.

A secret base is located among the tunnels of a mined-out asteroid called Riff Talmaine (C000200-B), after its discoverer. The tunnel entrances are camouflaged with slabs of nickle-iron, and the entire asteroid is dotted with beam and missile turrets. It orbits along the outer fringes of the belt and has a population of

700 regular inhabitants. During major pirate ops, however, the asteroid may support a population of several thousand.

Clues to Varan's Belt: Characters taken by pirates to the base in Varan's Belt may be told that the asteroid's name is Riff Talmaine. The name will mean nothing to them, but querying a library computer will tell them that Talmaine was an explorer/asteroid miner who investigated Varan's Belt (2317), Vestra (2415), and Polacci (2416) about 500 years ago. Vestra has no asteroid belt, ruling that world out.

Furthermore, if the players manage to get a look at the world's primary, they will see that the system has three suns, all red dwarfs (M3V, M6V, M9d). Vestra has two red dwarfs, while Polacci is an F4V-G4V double. The triple red dwarf arrangement is unusual enough that the players may be able to identify the system simply by getting a look at the suns. To do this, one or more of the players will have to don spacesuits and sneak outside.

Of course, if they are discovered, they may have some difficulty getting the information back to the GSI.

Trevannic (2219 E876740-9): A system located midway between the Plavian League and the Swanfei Free Worlds. The world itself is notable for its native nonhuman species, the pseudoreptilian Droashav.

The pirate base is located within caverns beneath the surface of Trevannic's moon, an airless, thousand-mile diameter body called Trevannic Alpha by humans, Vrad by the natives. Vrad (ES00410-A) has extensive underground facilities, including ship cradles accessed through an artificial crater floor which rolls back out of the way to accommodate incoming ships. The crater walls mount well-hidden beam and missile launchers, as well as communications antennae and heavily-armored bunkers. A small, dome-shielded surface installation disguised as a communications and planetary monitor outpost serves as cover for the far larger,

hidden base underground. Satellites in orbit about both the moon and Trevannic serve as a deep space warning network.

Today the natives tolerate a surface base on Trevannic's north polar Asuurash continent, where they buy offworld goods such as electronic components and breech-loading weapons. Their two principal currencies of exchange are water for the Trevannic Alpha base, and themselves as mercenaries; Droashav warriors have served as mercenaries throughout the Sector for over a century, and tribal chiefs assign their warriors in return for shiploads of trade goods.

Droashav mercenaries have served with the military forces of several governments in the sector, including the Hochiken People's Assembly and the Trindel Confederacy. More frequently, they can be found in the personal entourage of some wealthy corporate heads and industrialists as body guards. Most common of all, Droashav mercs can be encountered as troops with pirate raid fleets. The Castran Marauders currently employ at least three hundred Droashav warriors as shock troops for boarding parties and raids against planetary installations.

Trevannic's moon offers an almost ideal base for pirate operations in the region. It is only Jump-3 from either Vole or Bonnhelm, both on the Gateway-Sardis run, though the Bonnhelm naval base discourages pirate activities in that system. It was also the base for the pirate raid on Tavarand in 908, a world on the Plavian League border, again only a Jump-3 distant.

Clues to Trevannic: If the player characters are able to get outside the base, they will be able to see that they are on an airless moon of an earthlike world, colorful with blue oceans, golden deserts, green jungles and grasslands, white clouds. Trevannic is the fourth planet out from a bright, hot, F5V star; it will appear smaller to the naked eye than Sol does from Earth and will have a characteristic, arc-harsh white color, uncomfortable to look at even with filters.

F-class stars are relatively rare compared to G, K, or M-class suns. By examining a list of worlds in the sector circling F-class stars, the adventurers should be able to figure out which system they are in. Bonnhelm, for instance, has an F9V sun, but it is a desert world with no seas; the world seen from the pirate moon has large, blue oceans. Vole and Polacci both have F-class suns, but as parts of double systems. Finestre has an F8 sun, but the world has an exotic atmosphere, its surface forever veiled beneath thick, poisonous clouds. Azuris is an ocean planet with only marine archipelagos showing above the surface, while Agramenx has a very thin atmosphere, with few clouds.

By comparing the world they saw in the moon's sky with survey data information, the players should be able to figure out that the base is located beneath the surface of Trevannic's single asteroid-sized moon, Vrad.

As a further clue, the referee might allow the players to learn that the Droashav bodyguards accompanying Tal and serving in his army are, in fact, from that planet. By identifying the Droashav through library records, it would be easy to learn that they come from the world called Trevannic, at parsec 2219.

Sandhaven (2918 B000830-A): Sandhaven is the name for the innermost of two broad asteroid belts circling a tiny, M9 red dwarf. The system is one of the Swanfei Free Worlds, having applied for membership in 850 Imperial when the Free Worlds were first organizing.

The largest asteroid could be classified as a planet in its own right. Gandry (B100630-A) has a steady population of over one million, living in settlements tunneled into the rocky crust of this 1600-kilometer, airless worldlet. Lying in the inner, rocky belt, it serves as the local trading post and transhipment point for the 300 million belters who live in-system. The two planetoid belts are separated by a small gas giant, Reynor, which is the source of unrefined fuel scooped up and transported to Gandry for processing. The outer gas giant, Sidrin, is a brown dwarf at an extreme distance (orbit zone 6), and hazardous to approach. The outer asteroid belt (orbit zone 3) is mainly composed of ice bodies and is rarely visited.

The Castran Marauders maintain two bases in the Sandhaven system. One is located within the outer planetoid belt, in tunnels blasted out of the rocky core of an ice-covered worldlet 300 miles in diameter. The second is hidden in caverns on one of the planet-sized moons of Sidrin (Sidrin Delta, C102200-A), an ice-capped vacuum world orbiting at the fringes of the deadly Sidrin radiation fields. Both bases have small, permanent crews (about 300-500 individuals) but have facilities to allow them to support much larger populations during major operations. The raid on Salurian Lines' *Salurian Star* four months ago was mounted from Sidrin Delta.

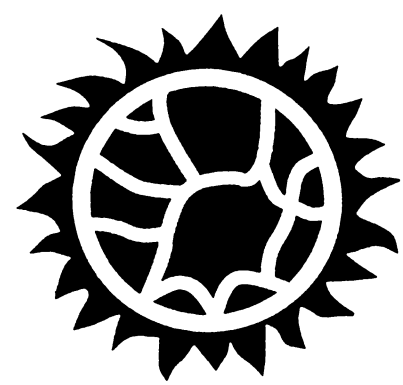
The Sandhaven system is a liability as a pirate base in that it lies fully three jumps away from any of the worlds of the Gateway-Sardis Run even for ships capable of Jump-3. However, it is well off the beaten track for patrol vessels, and since it is a member of the Swanfei Independency, it is not as likely as the independent worlds to be patrolled by Plavian or Galian pirate hunter fleets. Raynan Tal is known to frequent the system and is frequently seen on Gandry, where he owns a large estate.

Player characters looking for Tal are likely to find him on this world.

Clues to Sandhaven: If the characters can get a look at the sky outside the base, they may be able to see Sandhaven's sun, a minute M9 dwarf. From the ice-capped asteroid in the outer planetoid belt, the sun will appear as a tiny red disk. From Sidrin Delta, the sun is only a rather bright red star.

Class-M stars are the most common suns, of course, but the characters should be able to do some detective work to narrow the field. They might learn, for example, that the largest settlement in the system is Gandry, an asteroid. There are only three asteroid belts classified as worlds in the Four Subsectors. Varan's Belt (also a pirate hideout) has twin class-M stars, while Starbelt, in the Trindel Confederacy, circles an orange K-type sun and is the location of a major, class A starport.

Other clues could be supplied by the discovery that Raynan Tal has an estate on a world in that system. Computer research later might reveal that Tal owns an estate on Gandry, and that Gandry is the largest asteroid in the Sandhaven system. The fact that Sandhaven is only three parsecs from Carlton, capital of the Swanfei Free Worlds, could also be an important clue. Jump-3 capable ships departing from Carlton could make the trip in a single week, while Jump-2 ships will stop for refueling at Pirate's Haven (2819). Unless, of course, the pirates are taking their passengers the long way around in order to confuse them.



FORCE BRAVO

LORDS OF THUNDER: SECRET GUERRILLA FORCES

Force Bravo is the code name of a guerrilla military force now training on the world of Kolan (2831). Composed primarily of expatriate military personnel who fled the K'kree occupation of the former Renkard Union eleven years ago, Force Bravo numbers perhaps 20,000 men and women, and is committed to a return to the Renkard Union as an army of liberation.

The unit was conceived and assembled by Grand Admiral Hugo Vandamien after his ignominious defeat at Xabthar in 1106 and the subsequent Renkard surrender at Silest. He has invested much of his personal fortune into the enterprise and has been actively recruiting men, ships, and equipment to continue the project.

Force Bravo is currently hiring mercenaries to operate training cadres on Kolan, with special emphasis on covert operations, demolitions, sabotage, and unconventional warfare. Ships are being assembled to carry Force Bravo strike teams across the border, past the K'kree blockade, and to land them at selected sites on Akabar, Vulan, and Kent. Ships are also necessary to carry men, weapons, and equipment from places such as Gateway and Carlton to assembly points on Kolan. Since the Megusard Corporate has been attempting to make peace with the K'kree, Kolan has become an acute embarrassment for the Megusard Government. Sardis has been trying to stop the flow of men and equipment to the rebels by intercepting it at Sardis and by interdicting Kolan. Widespread smuggling continues, however, by merchant adventurers, pirates, small trading companies, and private individuals who believe in the Renkard cause.

Though dedicated and committed to the liberation of their homeworlds, Force Bravo is almost certainly doomed. The unit has already been penetrated by Renkard refugees who are, for various reasons, in the employ of the K'kree, and most of the unit's plans are already known to K'kree regional commanders. A large K'kree battlefleet is currently at Akabar, positioned to intercept starships which arrive in-system from across the border. Sardis is continuing its efforts to shut Force Bravo down, though for political reasons an out-and-out military intervention is probably not a viable option.

Referee's Notes: The characters will encounter Force Bravo in the course of an adventure if they choose to smuggle weapons into Kolan. This part of the scenario can be presented as a complete adventure in its own right. The referee should feel free to elaborate on the gunrunning part of the adventure as much as he likes, but he should keep several points in mind:

• The Megusard Corporate government is actively discouraging Force Bravo in order to placate the K'kree. Mercenaries or gunrunners who are caught outside the Kolan system will be harassed, imprisoned, or put on the first ship out of the Corporate. Ships carrying weapons may be boarded, searched, impounded, or confiscated.

• Kolan itself is not subject to interference by Sardis, since the local government actively supports Force Bravo. However, the system is subject to frequent raids by K'kree forces which approach ships in-system, order them to submit to inspection, and fire upon those which refuse. Ships found carrying weapons or military equipment are confiscated or destroyed. The appearance of K'kree forces is at the referee's discretion.

• Force Bravo, while a valiant effort by brave men, will never amount to much. Its leaders are divided, its troops poorly led. With decent training and leadership (ideally provided by the player characters themselves) Force Bravo will be able to engage in successful cross-border raids into the old Renkard Union, but there is no hope of reclaiming the Union from the K'kree invaders.

• Gunrunning to Kolan is an ideal way to meet the NPC Raynan Tal, who also engages in such operations. Contact with Tal could be deliberate on the part of the characters — they wanted to meet him as part of Operation Nova and use this means as a way of introducing themselves — or accidental, a means for the referee to involve the characters with the Castran Marauders. Tal respects daring, initiative, and cleverness. A good showing by the characters in a tight spot — evading a K'kree patrol, for example — would be a good way of recommending them to the Castran Marauders' chief.

• This scenario is also a good way to meet the NPC Admiral Vandamien. At the referee's discretion, he may show up later as head of a fleet contingent which will take part in the final showdown with K'kree forces off Trevannic.

THE K'KREE

LORDS OF THUNDER: RACES OF THE SECTOR

The K'kree are one of the six major races, a civilization of intelligent herbivores which has come to dominate a vast region of space to trailing of the Imperium known as the Two Thousand Worlds. Their culture is almost as old as that of the Vilani, the oldest of the starfaring human civilizations. The K'kree are six-limbed, bilaterally symmetrical, homeothermic grazing herbivores and are most at home on the broad, grassy plains of Kirur. This world — Kirur/Thirty (0505 B863A03-F) — is a dry world of rugged mountains, deserts, high plateaus and vast, wind-swept prairies.

Because of a chance resemblance to the man-horse hybrids of Earth-human mythology, the first humans to encounter K'kree called them *Centaurs.* This term is somewhat dated now, however, and it is most often encountered only as an epithet used by humans, especially among those merchants who have frequent contact with them. The preferred name is K'kree, a word which is not precisely translatable in human terms but which could be rendered as "The Great Herd."

K'kree Physiology

Of all major races, the K'kree are the most massive. A typical adult male masses 550 kilograms and stands 1.5 meters tall at the shoulder. When standing erect, the head reaches to between 2 and 2.4 meters above the ground. Females average 15% to 20% smaller than the males.

The body is divided into two parts, upper torso and lower torso, and the spine is jointed just behind the middle pair of limbs, a relic of the time when K'kree could walk either on four legs or on six. The spine joint is protected by a massive hump of fat and muscle at the juncture.

K'kree are bilaterally symmetrical, hexapodal, homeothermic, viviparous, and are otherwise similar in many respects to Terran mammals. Unlike mammals, however, the females feed the young partially digested food which they regurgitate for the purpose from a pre-stomach pouch. The circulatory system is somewhat more complex than mammals, employing two hearts.

The K'kree hand is notable and can be described as a highly-modified hoof. The fingers are slender, jointed structures which telescope back out of the way when they are not needed. The solid, ulnar extension of the lower leg which serves as the "thumb" is not unlike a foreleg hoof. It serves as a lever against which the fingers work, and can also be employed as a deadly weapon in unarmed combat. The arrangement is more flexible than the human hand, but it is neither as strong nor as dexterous. K'kree have considerable difficulty manipulating tools or weapons which were not specifically designed for their use. Humans, on the other hand, are hampered only by the bulk and (for them) clumsy arrangement of parts on K'kree tools or weapons.

Outwardly, K'kree are covered with short, dense fur, usually gray or gray-brown in color but sometimes red-brown or black. The mane, or pkri!r, is dense and black, covering the head, neck, and upper back of both sexes. Older K'kree exhibit streaks of silver or white in their manes, especially near the hair roots. Senior herd males and Krurruna can frequently be discerned by mane coloration. How the mane is cut or braided is usually an indication of caste within the herd society. Servants have the mane shaved completely. Merchants and other intermediate (well-born) castes shave only the top portions of their skulls. Generally the rest of the mane is braided in complex designs which indicate status and inter-herd relationships. Females shave their heads in the manner of the father or husband's caste. The hair is braided or decorated in long strings of colored beads, the designs describing family status and relationships.

With the exception of touch and possibly taste, K'kree senses are uniformly keener than their human counterparts. Their vision is at least as acute, though they cannot see as far into the red end of the spectrum as humans. In compensation, they can see farther into the ultraviolet than humans do, a consequence of the fact that Kirur's sun is hotter and emits greater amounts of ultraviolet than Earth's. K'kree can see colors in rocks and plants that humans are blind to. K'kree hearing is more acute than human hearing and extends over a broader range, both in high and low frequencies. K'kree eyes are small, darkly pigmented, deep set in heavy, protective sockets, and are further protected by thick, nictating membranes — all devices to protect from Kirur's bright sunlight.

The sharpest K'kree sense is smell. They rely on smell to distinguish between individual K'kree or humans far more than they use sight. For K'kree, all humans look very much alike, but no two humans smell the same. Further, K'kree with experience in dealing with humans quickly learn to read basic human emotions, including fear, anger, sexual desire, or nervousness simply by subtle changes in the human's body odor. They can often guess where an individual has been or what he has been doing for the past several hours.

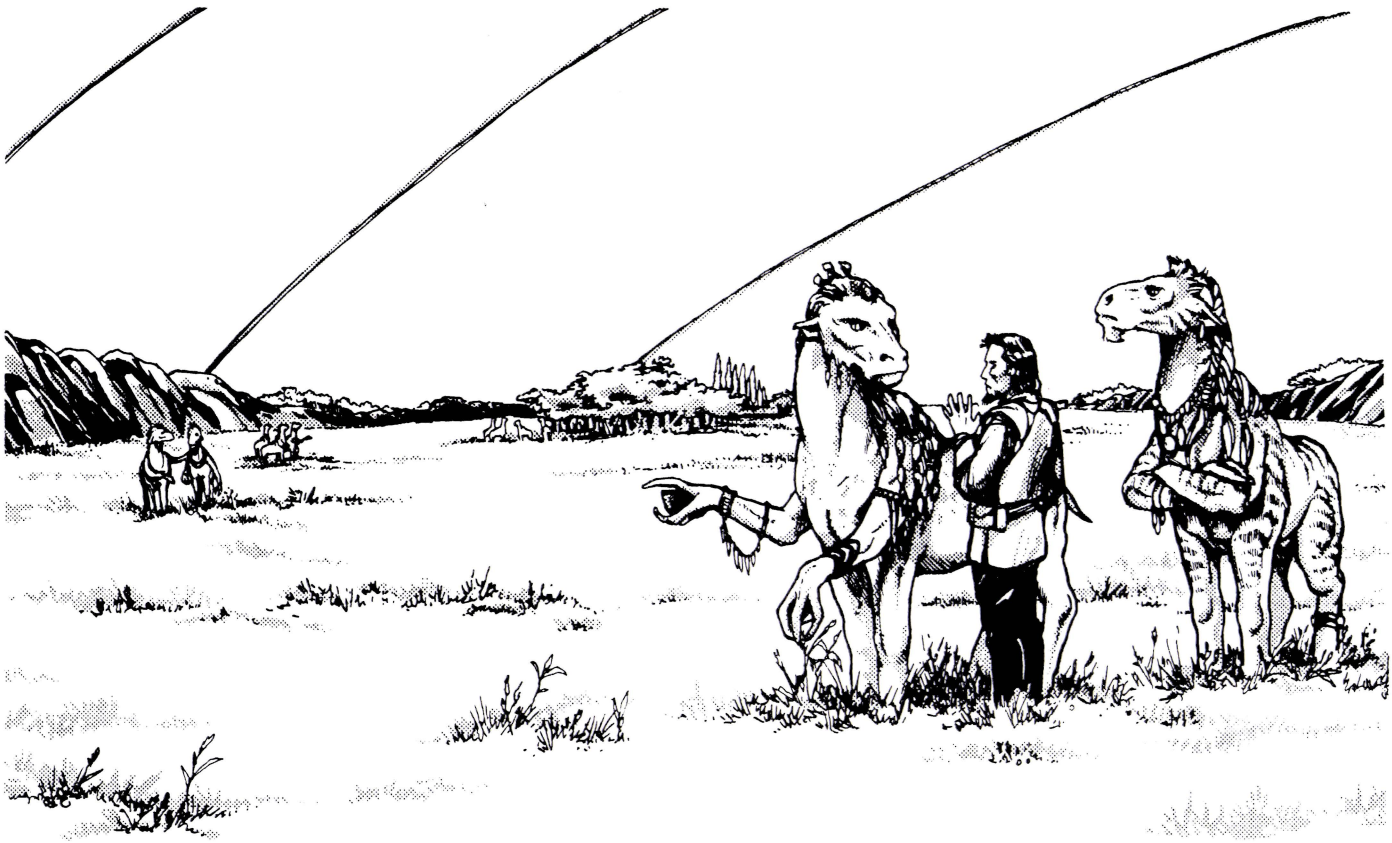
Perfumery is a K'kree art form, with K'kree artists producing what amount to symphonies of mingled odors, each telling part of a story or evoking a mood in its audience. It is a well known fact that K'kree can detect the smell of meat on the breath and in the body odors of humans as much as three days after the meal. K'kree imagery relies on smell more than human analogues; the K'kree equivalent of "see you later" translates better as "smell you later," while the human phrase "I understand" is rendered literally in K'kree as "I have the scent."

In humans, taste and smell are closely related. K'kree do not refer to taste as a separate sense at all. Whether this is because they do not have a sense of taste — relying instead on smell — or because their acute senses of taste and smell are intermingled is unknown. Quite probably, both senses are experienced by the K'kree in ways quite impossible for humans to imagine.

The K'kree sense of touch is rather poorly developed. Their hands do not have the same rich concentration of nerve endings as do human fingers, and their skin over most of their bodies is thick, tough, and somewhat leathery — a protection from the harsher, UV-laden sunlight of their native world.

K'kree Psychology

Three specific psychological factors shape the normal K'kree psyche, the way he thinks, acts, and reacts. As with any nonhuman sophont, the self-evident fact that K'kree are not human should



be kept in mind. Their way of looking at things — their world view — is different from that of most humans and is shaped by their background and their origins.

Gregariousness: Normal K'kree are almost never found alone. They are herd animals. Not only are they distinctly uncomfortable when not surrounded by members of their own kind, they find it difficult to think in terms of an individual. The K'kree word for "my" actually applies to herd possessions, and concepts of "property" extend only to ownership of family, herd, or the K'kree race as a whole. "Privacy" and "individuality" are strange and alien concepts to them, as difficult for them to understand as their need for others of their kind is for humans.

Claustrophobia: All normal humans have a certain measure of acrophobia — the fear of heights — with some individuals possessing this trait to a greater degree than others. It is a survival trait which most humans can overcome at need, though a few cannot and find themselves incapacitated by fear when exposed to a steep drop. Similarly, all normal K'kree have a fear of enclosed spaces, what in humans would be called claustrophobia. For K'kree, this is normal, a survival trait rooted in their background as nomadic plains dwellers.

The fact has had a strong influence on K'kree architecture and engineering. Their cities consist of low, single-story dwellings, sometimes roofed by transparent domes. All buildings are at least partly open to the sky, and often consist of three-walled rooms opening on a central, unroofed courtyard. Partitions inside rooms are rare; when deemed necessary, they are made of transparencies, curtains, thin tapestries, or bead-work hangings.

Their innate claustrophobia was one of the largest barriers K'kree had to overcome in the development of spaceflight. K'kree spacecraft have always been huge, flat, dome-topped affairs big enough to carry a large number of K'kree at once. For this reason, the first K'kree air- and spacecraft were antigravity devices. The idea of sealing one or a few of their number into a tiny, enclosed vehicle never occurred to them — and would have been abhorrent to them if it had. The K'kree may be the only technic civilization in Charted Space which went straight to antigravity propulsion without first experimenting with chemical rockets or aircraft driven by internal combustion engines.

Despite this, select K'kree have been able to overcome their claustrophobic tendencies through training, discipline, drugs (tranquilizers and olfactory stimulants) and psychoelectronic means (holography, wide-screen imaging, and biofeedback conditioning). These K'kree (most of whom are thought to be a little odd by their normal companions, the way normal humans think of sky divers or test pilots) serve as crew members for starships, aircraft, armored vehicles; repair workers and mechanics who must work in "vacc suits" or tight spaces; and in similar occupations.

Vegetarianism: The K'kree as a culture have been described as militant vegetarians. Their intelligence confounded early Terran sophontologists who had predicted that no herbivorous species could be sapient, because typical herbivore survival traits did not favor intelligence. A popular phrase from those early days which describes this attitude was "how much intelligence does it take to sneak up on a blade of grass?"

This attitude proved to be chauvinistic. While comparatively rare, many intelligent species have been discovered which are not, strictly speaking, either carnivores or omnivores. The K'kree

were an especially sharp surprise, however, for in one sense they are more completely bloodthirsty than any carnivore.

This is because Humans, Aslan, Vargr, and all other known omnivore/carnivore species that kill for food (either now or in their distant past) have developed elaborate social structures and rituals to protect themselves with others of their own kind. The open-handed greeting (Look! No weapons!) is a case in point, a gesture common to dozens of meat-eating species. The K'kree have never had to worry about a threat from their own kind. Instead, their history is almost entirely one of extermination of other species perceived as a threat to the Herd.

The K'kree idea that carnivores are a threat to be eliminated as efficiently as possible is based on aspects of their social structure going back at least a hundred thousand years.

The K'kree have carried on a "fervent crusade" within the volume of space they dominate, forcing various primitive omnivorous species to become vegetarian, and—though details are not available — exterminating several carnivorous species entirely.

This crusade apparently has been extended to non-intelligent species as well, though apparently not on a systematic basis. Rumors have surfaced of several worlds within the K'kree domain ruined by ecological disasters brought on by the mass extinction of carnivorous species.

K'kree Prehistory

The K'kree themselves remember their ancestors as the Akeet!! Xkuung, roughly translated as Herds of the Dawn. Though little is known about them, most xenosophontological researchers believe the Xkuung were semi-intelligent grazers which lived in herds, probably organized somewhat along the same lines as K'kree herds today.

Some authorities suspect that the G'naak, the K'kree's ancestral enemies (see: The G'naak), also developed civilization at about the same time as the K'kree, but this is surmise only. There are several theories as to just what the original G'naak were, none entirely satisfactory, and it is not even certain whether these original G'naak were native to Kirur, native to Kirur's moon, or were interlopers in the system and native to some other star system entirely.

Very little field work on the subject to clear up the question one way or another has been permitted on Kirur itself, for K'kree authorities seem reluctant to allow human researchers to carry out paleontological or archaeological studies of any kind on their home world. The K'kree themselves show little curiosity about their own origins in either a scientific or a religious sense. Their conservative nature tends to impede the course of learning for learning's sake, and the assumption among most herd members today is that the events of the distant past were no different than they are today and, in any case, have no bearing on the present.

At the same time, K'kree legends, myths, and epic poetry do contain frequent mention of the Nagr'axk ee nak, the shadowed time of nightmare; and the Nagr'ika'rrgaa, the time of shed blood. This period of genocidal interspecies warfare during the dark beginnings of their prehistory has obviously left a deep impression on modern K'kree thought and philosophy.

According to the legends, the K'kree herds banded together in a war which may have lasted for millennia and which ended only when the G'naak — whoever or whatever they might have been — were extinct. There is today no trace of a second intelligent civilization on Kirur, though it should be remembered that only two human archaeological expeditions have researched the problem on Kirur itself. Traces of this war have been documented on Kirrixur, the close, large satellite of Kirur.

One fact seems clear. At the beginning of this period of genocidal conflict, there was little or no organization of the K'kree save at the level of individual herds. At the end, thousands of years later, one herd in particular had begun gaining ascendency on the upland plains of Xtengir.

K'kree History

Approximately eighty thousand years ago, the first K'kree cities were built. Their appearance was a remarkable cultural achievement. K'kree are by nature conservative in nature, each generation tending to follow the ways of its predecessors, and nomadic herds had no special need for cities. It is thought, however, that the invention of agriculture spurred the need for cities, if only as central repositories for harvested grain. The lack of seasonal variation on Kirur allows several growing seasons through the course of one year, and farming became a logical alternative to the nomadic life. It became simpler logistically for herds to remain in one place with stores of grain set aside against the possibility of blight or a bad harvest, rather than to attempt to continue travelling with grain stores carried on wagons.

The earliest cities were little more than defensive perimeters erected as defense against marauding carnivores. These encampments, known as lurkaang, were originally simple wicker barricades, but as cities became more permanent they eventually grew to be large, high-walled fortresses.

Cities were still only semipermanent entities for many tens of thousands of years, however. The agricultural techniques in common use tended to exhaust the soil in a given area; after a few generations, the K'kree herds farming that region would be forced to abandon their lurkaang and move elsewhere. Some cities were abandoned, left deserted, then reoccupied many times over the course of thousands of years.

During this period, it is likely, the last of Kirur's native carnivore species were driven into extinction. K'kree polearms — first of worked bone or stone, later of bronze, finally of iron and steel — were developed for use in massive predator hunts which often involved the cooperation of a number of tribes working over a large geographical area. Most tribes kept standing armed formations called Kirunika'rra — "Killers of Vermin" — semi-formal units which later formed the basis for the K'kree military caste.

Perhaps seventeen thousand Terran years ago, improved agricultural techniques and the widespread use of writing and record keeping encouraged the establishment of more permanent cities. Kala' — the word originally referred to a storage bin for grain but later came to mean a repository of written records — were becoming larger and bulkier, and it was simpler to leave them in one place rather than transport them every time the herd went on the move. The rise of civilization and technology was rapid after this.

Recorded K'kree history begins with their calendar, at the founding of Rak'keer! as the capital city of Kirur nearly 9300 years ago (-8175 Imperial, or 3668 B.C. Terran reckoning). Located in the central regions of the Xtengir uplands, the builders of Rak'keer! appear to have been the first to experiment with government beyond loose alliances between herds. The K'kree known to history as *Ghia'karrim'keer! Ikuu L'rr* — the name translates as "Lord Founding Father of the Red Sky Dawn" and is almost certainly a name invented long after the fact — is remembered as the first Steppelord, the ruler who began the unification of the K'kree race.

Unification was a slow process, given that there are no ocean

barriers to land travel on Kirur. It lasted almost four thousand Terran years and was accomplished without warfare or conquest. The Xtengir civilization was the most technically advanced of the K'kree cultural groups. As it expanded, it made contact with scattered nomadic herds, offering them the benefits of civilization. Conversions were never quick; K'kree conservatism ensured that the nomads preferred the old ways. But after extended periods of contact, nomadic cultures became more and more dependent on trade with the Xtengir herds and were gradually absorbed. An intriguing side note to K'kree history: the world conquerors and power seekers so prevalent in human history are virtually unknown in the history of Kirur. K'kree history appears to be virtually devoid of intertribal or internecine warfare.

By 3210, unification was essentially complete, and the K'kree had attained the rough equivalent of tech level 7, though there were significant gaps in military and transportation technology. The K'kree — with Kirur's native carnivores now extinct and a peaceful, united world culture now in place — had no organized military, and the only weapons were the traditional steel halberds and polearms developed for the ancient predator hunts. Transportation was largely limited to rail cars which were used for freight only.

At about this time, K'kree astronomers had definitely established the existence of intelligent life on Kirur's satellite, Kirrixur . . . an easy enough assumption to make since the alien civilization's lights could be seen gleaming on the dark portion of the moon at night.

K'kree records are hazy at this point; they state that K'kree scientists established both that the Kirrixurians were carnivores and that they posed a threat to the K'kree. Exactly how this was determined is unknown. What is certain is that the K'kree realized that they were face to face with their darkest nightmare, a potential foe which was intelligent and civilized . . . and a carnivore. Predictably, the K'kree named the strangers G'naak. Given their history, and the memories of earlier millennia passed down through the archives of the kala', it is not surprising that they abandoned conservatism for an unprecedented burst of technical and scientific creativity.

The period between K'kree year 3200 and 3220 is still known as Ur'traa l' Gnur, the Fearful Time. K'kree scientists worked ceaselessly for nearly twenty-five Terran years, and in that time cracked the three key elements of technic civilization: superconductivity, fusion power, and antigravity.

By 3220, the first primitive K'kree gravboats were operational, and the Guraa'khan — usually translated as "crusade" — was begun. A surprise bombing raid was launched against the complex determined to be the Kirrixurian capital. Within a century, the last Kirrixurian G'naak was dead, their last city was reduced to a radioactive, glass-lined crater, and the moon was occupied by K'kree Kirunika'rra colonists.

The impetus given K'kree technology by the Kirrixurian crusade lasted for some time. K'kree physicists demonstrated a working jump drive by K'kree Year 3346. By this time, the K'kree race had a mission, one embodied in the K'kree philosophical concept of Ruu and sealed in the genocide of the Kirrixurian G'naak. The K'kree would set forth into the universe on a righteous guraa'khan, dedicated to the eradication of carnivorous species on every world within the K'kree hegemony. The term T't'tkahk Xeng Kirr, the Two Thousand Worlds, came into use at this time as an expression of K'kree manifest destiny.

The K'kree colonized many worlds and brought many civilizations under their dominion. Most were allowed to live in peace with only two requirements: they had to accept K'kree

GATEWAY TIMELINE

The following timeline establishes the major events in the history of Gateway Sector. Various important events outside the sector but having a bearing on Gateway's history are included for reference.

A Chronology of Gateway Sector

Imperial	*Solomani*	*K'kree*	*Event*
-4305	AD 213	3206	K'kree unification of Kirur
-4142	376	3341	K'kree discover Jump Drive
-2431	2087	4765	Solomani discover Jump drive
-2013	2505	5113	K'kree-Hiver War ends.
-1776	2742	5310	Long Night begins
-1700	2818	5374	(Approx.) Human explorers first enter region
-1511	3007	5531	Solomani colonize Carlton
-500	4018	6372	(Approx.) Rise of the interstellar corporations
-312	4206	6528	Founding of Galastrian Metals, Tharver
-224	4294	6602	Gateway Station begun
-200	4318	6622	Human contact with K'kree
-198	4320	6624	Gateway Sector organized and named
-150	4368	6663	Low-level wars in Gateway Sector
0	4518	6788	Founding of Third Imperium
70	4588	6846	Corporate Sector Wars end. Imperial presence felt
75	4593	6850	Imperial embassy on Tharver
103	4621	6874	Imperial-K'kree meeting on Mneomon
251	4769	6997	Gateway Worker's Rising
252	4770	6998	Independence Acts of 252
302	4820	7039	Revolt on Tharver. Fall of Galastrian Metals
305	4823	7042	League Concord Founding of Galian League
320	4838	7054	Workers' revolt on Balaclaron. The Collective
424	4942	7141	Fall of Vanadian Cartel
425	4943	7142	Founding of Hochiken Republic
590	5188	7278	Military coup in Hochiken Republic
612	5130	7298	Heptad War (Galian-Hochiken)
750	5268	7413	Viyard Alliance joins Collective
752	5270	7415	First Galian-Viyard War (752-758)
754	5272	7416	Battle of Coralee
758	5276	7420	Treaty of Umbrin. Viyard Concourse established
800	5318	7455	Rise of piracy in Castra and elsewhere
874	5392	7516	L'lluii'!pri'vguurlg embraces *Axavktrr xur*

suzerainty and they had to give up meat. Civilizations which resisted — species, for example, which were carnivorous by nature and necessity rather than by choice — were attacked with a ruthless and efficient savagery uncommon even among carnivorous warrior races; such campaigns were less campaigns of warfare than they were campaigns of mass extermination. A handful of minor races fought well enough that their worlds were merely interdicted. Others were eliminated.

Most civilizations — species which were omnivorous to begin with — accepted the K'kree demands and changed their ways.

In the K'kree Year 5092, the K'kree came into contact with several minor races which were client civilizations of the Hivers, another Major Race. Seven years later, the K'kree and the Hivers were in direct contact and a general war had broken out.

The Hivers were not carnivores, but their world view was significantly different from that of the K'kree. Believing that each race is unique, that all can work together for the common good, and that it is the responsibility of advanced races to help and nurture those which are more primitive, the Hivers tend to work from within, using genetic, social and cultural manipulation to achieve political ends. After suffering numerous initial military setbacks, the Hivers were able to demonstrate to K'kree observers that they had the power — and the will — to literally rework K'kree society into a more docile and tractable form.

The war ended abruptly on terms favorable to the Hivers. Since that time, K'kree borders have remained more or less static. K'kree rule within their hegemony, however, continues unchanged.

The K'kree met human explorers within the Crucis Margin in K'kree Year 6622 (-200 Imperial). Relations with the Imperium have been largely peaceful, though misunderstandings and interspecies prejudice have caused numerous border incidents.

Since the opening of the Rebellion within the Imperium, little has been heard from K'kree space. The Two Thousand Worlds do not directly border on any space claimed by any of the contenders for the Imperium, and contact with the K'kree is limited to trading missions and embassies within human space. In regions such as the Gateway Sector, human splinter cultures are frequently mingled with worlds colonized by K'kree offshoots, and there is more opportunity for trade, and for misunderstandings.

Recently, however, new pressures have begun to strain at the fabric of human-K'kree relations. Two hundred fifty years ago, a charismatic K'kree leader, L'lluii'!pri'vguurlg embraced the tenets of Axavktrr xur, a K'kree philosophical and moral stance largely discredited since the Hiver War.

Unable to gain acceptance within the Two Thousand Worlds, later banished for their defiance of the Overlord of Lords, L'lluii'!pri'vguurlg and his followers journeyed beyond the recognized boundaries of the K'kree hegemony, conquering a world in the Luretir!girr subsector and exterminating its sapient but carnivorous inhabitants. The world, Tuuxk'ngkrigr, became the capital of a new K'kree empire called Xuruk'xaar'keer!. The name translates roughly as "herd collective of the Lords of Thunder (or power)," which humans often shorten to "Xuruk."

During the past two centuries, other K'kree lords and their clans who embraced Axavktrr xur emigrated to Xuruk. In 1106, K'kree forces under the warlord Kaxk inflicted a major defeat on the navy of the Renkard Union, and occupied the Union's capital at Silest. Having incorporated the Renkard worlds into the Xuruk Empire, Kaxk and his legions are turning their attention to Megusard, a neighboring assembly of human worlds lying within Gateway Sector.

885	5403	7525	Founding of Xuruk'xaar'keer!, the Xuruk Empire.
908	5426	7544	Pirate raid on Tavarand
910	5428	7546	Galian Trade League begins to fragment
911	5429	7547	Galian Civil War begins
912	5430	7548	Plavians declare independence
915	5433	7550	Trindelli declare independence
918	5436	7552	Galian Civil War ends. Fall of Galian League
925	5443	7558	Founding of Galian Federation
1098	5616	7703	Clovian War (Galian-Trindel vs. Viyard)
1100	5618	7704	Peace of Farnoc ends Clovian War
1106	5624	7709	Battle of Xabthar. Fall of Silest.
1107	5625	7710	Renkard Union incorporated into Xuruk Empire.
1117	5635	7718	Struggle for succession in Imperium
1120	5638	7721	Time now

K'kree Timetable

The principal events of K'kree history are outlined on the chart above. For those events for which precise dating is possible, dates are listed for the K'kree calendar, the Standard Imperial calendar, and the old Terran calendar. The commonly accepted abbreviation KY is used for K'kree Year.

• Circa (?) -10 million years

Appearance of K'kree precursors, a herbivorous, plains-dwelling herd animal known to the K'kree as Akeet!! Xkuung.

• Circa -3 million years

Supernova at 0606/Thirty. Beginnings of K'kree intelligence.

• Circa (?) -100,000 years to (?) -30,000 years

Nagr'axk ee nak, the shadowed time of nightmare. Increased competition with one or more Kiruran carnivores threatens K'kree survival. It is possible that the K'kree come close to extinction at this time.

• Circa -80,000 years

First K'kree cities founded, based on the defensive lurkaang of individual xuruk.

• Circa (?) -30,000 years

Nagr'ika'rrgaa, the time of shed blood. The systematic extermination of carnivorous species native to Kirur begins. Herds band together in temporary units called xuruk for mutual defense.

• Circa -10,000 years

Writing developed. The first written records are stored at repositories called kala'.

• KY 0 (-8175 Imperial/3668 B.C.)
Rak'keer! founded in the central Xtengir uplands by Ghia'karrim'keer! !kuu L'rr as the center of administration for the entire K'kree race. The beginnings of a world civilization.

• About KY 1000 (-6970 Imperial/2463 B.C.)
The Guraa, the Law of Reason which defines the ideal K'kree social order and speculates about the K'kree place in the universe, is first formulated.

• KY 3206 (-4305 Imperial/213 AD)
Unification of Kirur under one Steppelord complete. K'kree at TL 7.

• KY 3220 (-4288 Imperial/230 AD)
First K'kree grav drive. Beginnings of war of extermination against inhabitants of Kirrixur. K'kree at approximately TL 9.

• KY 3320 (-4167 Imperial/351 AD)
Kirrixurian genocide complete. Declaration of the Axavktrr xur, the so-called fundamental principles of survival which call for the eradication of all carnivorous life forms throughout the universe and the ordering and retraining of herbivorous and omnivorous species under the Guraa, the K'kree laws of reason.

• KY 3341 (-4142 Imperial/376 AD)
First K'kree experiments with jump drives.

• KY 5092 (-2038 Imperial/2480 AD)
K'kree occupy several Hiver client worlds and begin exterminating local carnivore populations.

• KY 5099 (-2028 Imperial/2490 AD)
K'kree come into direct contact with the Hivers. Sixteen year Hiver-K'kree War begins.

• KY 5112 (-2012 Imperial/2504 AD)
Hiver-K'kree War ends when Hivers threaten to alter K'kree society along less bellicose lines. The principal of Axavktrr xur is overturned, though many K'kree continue to privately adhere to its precepts.

• KY 6622 (-200 Imperial/4318 AD)
First human contact with the K'kree.

• KY 7481 (874 Imperial/5462 AD)
L'lluii'!pri'vguurlg embraces Axavktrr xur.

• KY 7489 (885 Imperial/5473 AD)
Founding of Xuruk'xaar'keer!, the Xuruk Empire, outside the boundaries of K'kree space.

The Herd

All K'kree social organization is based on the unit the K'kree call k'krr, usually translated as herd but properly designating a single clan or family.

A single k'krr can vary in size from a handful of individuals to an enormous group numbering hundreds, sometimes thousands. Its leader is the elder male, called Keer!, or Lord, a word referring to any powerful ruler or director (such as the keer! of a starship) but having its origins in the concept of herd-leader. This leader is accompanied by a number of females, rr'chkr, or wives, of varying rank; by soldiers or naruch (wall) who are the unmarried male children of either the herd's lord or of a subordinate lord; and by servants, l'llurik (workers).

The size of a keer!'s household is a reflection of his power. Even a small clan herd will include a senior male, two or three females, and as many servants. The extended herd of a powerful lord will consist of as many as a hundred wives, hundreds of children, the families and servants of adult offspring, and several thousand servants. It should be remembered, however, that size alone is not a true reflection of a K'kree lord's worth. K'kree forced to travel — especially to other worlds — generally include only a small portion of their usual retinue, a few chief wives and several servants and retainers.

Females are casteless and acquire the caste of their mate, though subtle distinctions in rank are apparent within each herd. The senior female is called the rr'cheer!, which translates as herd mistress.

Children of the herd lord by the various females remain with the family until they are married, usually at about the age of thirty, or, in the case of males, until they become naruch. While they remain with the herd they are called k'rrick'chr, literally of-the-females. Training and education are the responsibility of the herd females.

At about age twenty, all K'kree males join the military. Traditionally, they served as warriors within their own clan herd, where they were called naruch — "wall," hence "security force." The feudal system of K'kree society, however, generally requires naruch to serve in an organized army under the command of an overlord of their clan. K'kree lords who demonstrate a need may be permitted by their overlord to retain a naruch as a personal guard.

Soldiers are drawn from every caste, their rank determined by their caste of origin. Length of a single service term is 6 K'kree years (about 7.25 Imperial years).

Included within the herd are servants, and in rich or powerful herds, the number of servants can greatly outnumber the wives and children. K'kree of low caste, they are collectively referred to as l'llurik, or workers.

Soldiers, or kirunika'rra, literally "killers of vermin," are a special case. All K'kree males serve in the militia of their herd before they mate. Some K'kree choose to remain in military service for their entire lives and are known as axternachur, "wall bearers." Serving as officers and noncoms, career military K'kree devote their entire lives to this calling and never take a mate. Most K'kree males, after serving as ordinary soldiers select a mate from another herd and begin a family of their own.

A young family dependent on a parent herd for support is called a ghikee, or offshoot, for as long as it is part of a senior herd. The herd may be the parent k'krr of either the male or the female but is usually the larger and more powerful of the two. When the male is wealthy enough to start an independent herd — proven by his ability to support servants of his own — the offshoot breaks off in an elaborate K'kree ceremony called the budding, or ka'keer'gheekr, and becomes a k'krr in its own right.

Extremely large herds, those numbering hundreds of individual K'kree, employ krurruna, literally "those-who-command," is usually translated simply as "boss." These are the under-leaders of a large K'kree herd and include senior wives for the females, called rr'cheer!; axternachur among the naruch, chief servants, and the older males of sizable ghikees within the herd. A herd's krurruna comprise the k'krurrin, or family council, an informal government

which runs the family's affairs under the direction of the keer!.

The krurruna — the word has a subtle pronunciation — functions as a kind of supreme ministerial council and legislative body under the rule of the Ghik'keer!k'ak T't'tkahk Xeng Kirr and administers the day-to-day affairs of the Two Thousand Worlds.

Caste and society

K'kree society is quite conservative and is defined by the philosophical concept called xt'nir, or "self-evident rightness." Xt'neer is the caste system which defines each K'kree's place in his society is codified in the writings of the Guraa, a word which means "reason" but is also applied to a body of written law also known as the Law of Reason. Besides defining the K'kree as the destined lords of all creation, the Guraa also describes the place and duties of each level within K'kree society.

In simplest terms, there are three broad castes within K'kree society: nobles, well-born, and servants.

Nobles: Although the concept of royalty is foreign to K'kree thought, certain clan lines have always been designated as lords, or nobles. These are the leaders of K'kree society, the clan lords-of-lords, the leaders of government (the krurruna), diplomats, and the heads of business corporate bodies. Nobles entering military service become officer trainees, and those who remain with the service go on to become military leaders.

The term Ghik'keer!k, or Steppelord, is applied to all males of the caste.

Well-Born: Often called merchants by humans, this caste serves as a kind of K'kree middle class and includes all artisans, scribes, scientists, engineers, merchants, and middle and lower-level corporate executives, administrators, and businessmen. Well-born K'kree entering the army become the equivalent of non-commissioned officers.

The caste is referred to as Kaa'kr, literally "well-born," in K'kree society.

Servants: This is the lower class of the K'kree social order, consisting of farmers, miners, ordinary laborers, personal servants, and those males who, for one reason or another, have lost their caste. In the army, these are the line soldiers.

The servant caste is called L'llurik, or workers.

Females have no caste but always assume the caste of their mate. Children, likewise, assume the caste of their male parent.

Caste extends to relationships within a given herd. Even a servant is still keer! over his own wife (usually there is only one) and children. Within a larger clan herd, an elaborate and subtle hierarchy or caste relationships exists between all of the herd members. Each wife has her own rank within the family, as does each servant. Lower-ranking members of each caste defer to those members higher in rank.

There is opportunity for advancement within each larger caste. Females can increase in rank with age, or through marriage to a more powerful family. Soldiers change caste when they leave the militia and marry, and a male and his entire family increase in position when they form a k'krr of their own. A clan lord can be elevated in station by wealth, or by acclamation by his peers; as he advances, members of his family advance as well.

"Caste" in the context of K'kree society is perhaps misleading, since the word carries the connotation of something imposed by legal or religious dictates. It should be remembered that the K'kree, born with an innate sense of position within a herd and the "rightness" of that position, would never even consider challenging the concept of xt'neer.

The power of the master of the herd is absolute. In theory he is permitted to kill any member of his herd who displeases him or violates the unwritten code of xt'nir. In practice, however, cases of such extreme punishment seem to be rare, or even nonexistent.

Ornamentation and caste

All adult K'kree, male and female, have a mane of long, coarse hair called the pkri!r, growing over their head and in along a ridge down their upper spines to a point just behind their middle limbs. The manes begin growing during adolescence and are closely identified with sexual virility and the K'kree concept of xaar, or dominance. Though customs vary from world to world within the K'kree dominion, the majority of K'kree have adopted patterns of pkri!r fashion which identify them within K'kree society.

Ghik'keer!k, or Steppelords, have full, uncut manes, leaving the pkri!r uncut as a symbol of virility and power. In older males, the pkri!r tends to gray from the middle, and a K'kree lord with a white or silver mane shock is regarded with special respect.

Kaa'kr, the members of merchant and craft guilds, shave the tops of their heads but allow the manes to grow.

L'llurik, or servants, shave their pkri!r entirely.

Females belonging to the noble or well-born castes shave the pkri!r on their heads, but braid, knot, and bead the strands growing from their spinal ridge. Allowed to dangle down the female's flank, the complexity of the braiding and the richness of the ornamental beads visually states the female's rank within her family, and of that family's wealth and position. Female servants shave their manes and spine ridges completely, like the males.

Soldiers cut their manes but generally leave an inch-long bristle down their spines and on their heads, where it serves as padding for their helmets and armor. The soldiers of some K'kree subcultures braid and knot their head manes as a record of battles or service.

Though they do not wear clothing, K'kree body ornamentation can also serve as clues to an individual K'kree's rank and position. In general, the richer and more complex the straps, mail, gorgets, bands, and hoops a K'kree wears, the higher his rank within his culture. Females and children wear ornaments which reflect their lord's position. Depending on the culture, servants may wear ornaments which identify them as members of a particular clan, or they may wear nothing.

Clan Hierarchy

Above the level of individual k'krrs, K'kree society is arranged in ordered ranks, usually along geographical lines. The building blocks are arrayed as follows:

K'krr: Basic family unit or herd, numbering from six to hundreds or even thousands of individuals. The leader is the Keer!, or lord, regardless of the family's actual caste, while under-leaders for large herds are designated as krurruna.

Xuruk: Herd collective, consisting of several herds in a given geographical area, ruled by a ghik'keer!k, or steppelord. Xuruk, the basis for K'kree cities, merchant guilds, and industrial collectives, consist of two or more k'krr cooperating together in close proximity.

Xurxeer!k: A collective of xuruk, usually within a single area. In human terms, this would be a country, but in K'kree terms a better designation is "group of cities," and it carries the connotation of

a number of cities related by trade routes and products. It is dominated by a ghir'ghik'keer!k, the Overlord of lords.

The ruling lords of K'kree colony planets are generally known as ghir'ghik'keer!k, who owe their fealty to the high lord of Kirur.

T't'tkahk Xeng Kirr: Literally two thousand worlds. Commonly translated as creation, night sky or universe. A complex K'kree term indicating the whole of creation as represented by all that can be seen. There is a deeper psychological meaning in the phrase stemming from the K'kree notion that they control all that they can see, i.e., the (roughly) two thousand stars that can be seen in Kirur's night sky. By literally translating this rather abstract meaning, Two Thousand Worlds has come to refer to K'kree-dominated space. The Ghik'keer!k'ak T't'tkahk Xeng Kirr, or Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds, is the ruling K'kree lord of the entire race.

The K'kree name for themselves, of course, is K'kree: the Great Herd.

K'kree Military Forces

The K'kree military system is built along feudal lines. K'kree lords often have personal security forces made up of unwed male children. In normal K'kree society, these males serve purely ritual functions, ceremonial reminders of a time when the young males guarded the herd from predators. Any male K'kree's soldiers, however, are at the call of those lords above him and are generally incorporated into the formal army for at least one term of six K'kree years (about 7.25 Imperial years).

Service in the army of a higher Steppelord is considered an honor for any soldier and raises the prestige and caste rank of those soldiers who are so chosen. Having command of a large army drawn from numerous subherds enhances a Steppelord's own power and prestige as well.

The formal, standing armies of K'kree worlds are drawn from the soldiery of all of the planet's lords and steppelords. Called kirunika'rra, (literally killers-of-vermin), the army patrols client worlds, keeps the peace, and — when called upon to do so — exterminates the carnivorous wildlife of distant colonies.

K'kree soldiers operate in ring'r consisting of fifty soldiers under the command of an axternachur, a K'kree of well-born rank. The term keer! is also used at times to denote an officer commanding a military formation, the captain of a starship, or any other K'kree in charge of a large number of K'kree outside the boundaries of the herd.

Only K'kree soldiers carry weapons. They wear by elaborate body armor and the traditional horned, flared helmets. In K'kree society, soldiers also serve as police, firefighters, and as bodyguard units for diplomatic and mercantile expeditions.

K'kree military forces use high-tech combat armor and vacc suits at need but are perhaps best known for their ceremonial armor, complex garb consisting of straps, leather, and plate armor of a design dating back at least twenty thousand years. Their ceremonial weapons, too, in particular the ax-bladed polearms called xrak, date back to pre-spaceflight eras. However, even a K'kree in full ceremonial dress and armed with archaic polearm still almost always carries modern weapons as well.

As a final note, it should be remembered that K'kree military personnel are frequently trained and conditioned to endure the (for K'kree) hardship of close confinement. The human analogue is humans who overcome their innate fear of falling to become airborne infantry or use gravbelts. K'kree personnel do serve, when necessary, within the tight confines of armored vehicles or atmospheric or space fighters. Such individuals are often regarded by their fellows as a bit "different." The term K'kriir!', "odd," is applied to those rare K'kree who do not share typical K'kree motivations of claustrophobia or gregariousness.

THE K'KREE PRESENCE IN THE GATEWAY SECTOR

The Renkard Union has just been taken over by the Xaar'keer! forces of the K'kree warlord known as Kaxk, the so-called *Lords of Thunder.* The defeat of human forces at the battle of Xabthar in 1106 led to the assimilation of the Union into the K'kree-dominated hegemony trailing of Gateway Sector. This hegemony, Xuruk'xaar'keer!, or the Xuruk Empire as it is known to humans, is an independent splinter group or offshoot of the Two Thousand Worlds. Large numbers of human and other refugees have fled Renkard in recent years, rather than accept K'kree legislations against the eating of meat. Most of the refugees have settled on worlds within the independent state of Megusard.

During the past several years, however, there has been increasing pressure on Megusard to join the Renkard Union. Both Kolan and Lov Fennaden have been raided on several occasions by K'kree warfleets, and K'kree ambassadorial lords have recently proposed a formal treaty between Megusard and Renkard which would bring the whole of Megusard under the dominion of the clans of the Xuruk Empire.

Recently, the situation has grown extremely tense. Human observers within the Farina subsector believe that the K'kree of the Empire are looking for any excuse to forcibly annex Megusard, and that excuse may have just been provided by the alleged theft of an important K'kree cultural-religious artifact. K'kree agents — both K'kree and humans — have been searching for a particular human, Enli Visirichurva, who is reputed to have stolen the artifact and is believed to be hiding somewhere within Megusard, probably on the capital of Sardis. If the artifact is not returned to K'kree representatives, an invasion is likely.

Relations have been further exacerbated by a band of expatriate Renkard military personnel called Force Bravo, currently training at secret bases on the Megusard world of Kolan. Actively recruiting additional forces and buying weapons and equipment from across the sector, it is Force Bravo's intent to return to their homeworlds within the Renkard Union as an army of liberation. Observers give them a very poor chance of success . . . but they could provide the spark which sets off a full-fledged K'kree invasion of Megusard and the Farina subsector.

The Rest of Gateway Sector

While Megusard is justifiably anxious about K'kree encroachment in Farina, most of the other interstellar governments within Gateway Sector have little interest in the worsening situation there. Two human powers, the Hochiken People's Assembly and the Viyard Concourse, are pressing territorial claims of their own, and there have been numerous border incidents, incursions, and raids already. The possibility of full-fledged interstellar war between the Hochiken people's Assembly and the Plavian League, and between the Galian Federation and the Viyard Concourse, is both immediate and real. War fears were recently given a boost by the ominous signing of a military pact between the HPA and the Viyards. If war begins, it is possible that it will spread to engulf most human governments and worlds in the sector.

And if that happens, the K'kree of the Lords of Thunder will be waiting in the wings, ready to take advantage of any situation which appears to offer them a favorable opportunity.

K'KREE VOCABULARY

LORDS OF THUNDER: LANGUAGE LIBRARY DATA

akeet!! xkuung: Herd of the Dawn. K'kree name for their most ancient ancestors.

axavktrr xur: An untranslatable concept perhaps best rendered as "survival through extermination by right." A K'kree philosophical concept, the so-called fundamental principles of survival which call for the eradication of all carnivorous life forms throughout the universe and the ordering and retraining of herbivorous and omnivorous species under the direction of the K'kree. First proclaimed upon the final eradication of the Kirrixurians, the concept is embodied in the much older Guraa. Though largely discredited by the K'kree defeat in the Hiver-K'kree War, it still claims many adherents.

axternachur: "Wall-bearers." In ancient times, the supports of the city wall, especially at the gates. Now a term referring to career military K'kree, the officers and noncoms of the K'kree army.

gaa'ak: Literally steaming blood, a reference to the sight and especially the smell of blood flowing from a freshly killed animal.

Ghia'karrim: Roughly "Founding Father." A term of respect among the K'kree, who regard ancestral steppelords with an almost religious awe. The first named K'kree of history was Ghia'karrim'keer! !kuu L'rr, i.e., The Lord Founding Father of the Red Sky Dawn.

gikhakh: K'kree form of ideographic writing, first used to make written records in clay tablets.

ghik: Steppe or prairie. The word carries the strong connotation of "open," "large," or "free."

ghikee: Offshoot. Literally "what grows from the ground." Term for a male and one or more mates living as part of a larger herd.

Ghik'keer!k: Steppelord. Title indicating the K'kree ruling a herd. Also a term for the K'kree noble class.

Ghik'keer!k'ak T't'tkahk Xeng Kirr: Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds. Title indicating the ruling K'kree lord of the entire race.

Ghir'ghik'keer!k: Overlord of lords. K'kree title for the ruler of a number of herds within a given geographical area.

g'naak: Usually translated "meat-eater" or "carnivore," the word is widely used by K'kree as a deliberately insulting term for other (lesser) species who eat meat.

G'naak also refers to a specific civilization native either to Kirur or to Kirur's satellite Kirrixur. The K'kree engaged in a genocidal war with these original G'naak at the dawn of their civilization and exterminated them.

guraa: Reason. The term usually refers to a specific body of written law known as the K'kree *Law of Reason.* It lays out the basic hierarchy of the K'kree caste system and discusses the xt'nir (rightness) for each. It unequivocally states that it is the destiny of the K'kree as a race to exterminate all carnivorous species across the universe wherever they may be found and assume its place as lords (keer!) over the redesigned ecosystems.

guraa'khan: Roughly "Crusade of Reason/Proper Order/Rightness." Originally, it referred to the First Crusade against the G'naak of Kirrixur. Difficult to translate, the concept suggests a campaign undertaken because the expected outcome is fundamental to the "rightness" of the universe. The word is now applied to any campaign against carnivorous species on worlds within the K'kree sphere.

kaa'kr: The well-born. The K'kree caste which includes craftsmen, merchants, and businessmen within K'kree society.

kala': Storage place. Originally a bin for storage of grain, the word later came to mean exclusively a place where records are kept. A library.

ka'keer'gheekr: Budding. An agricultural term referring to new growth. Now the name of an elaborate ritual by which a male, his wives, and servants leave one herd and begin a new and independent k'krr of their own.

kaxk: "Bearer." Name for those workers who wear elaborate harnesses in order to carry heavy loads. It has come to be applied to those K'kree tasked with a special mission or responsibility.

keer!: Lord. Generic K'kree term for any powerful ruler, master, or director.

khan'keer!: Roughly Lord of the Righteous Crusade. Generally translated as Warlord, a term for any powerful K'kree clan leader seeking to expand his herd's domain or exterminate threats to K'kree security (i.e., carnivores).

Kirrixur: The large, earthlike, inhabited satellite of Kirur. Notable as the homeworld of the G'naak, the intelligent carnivore/chaser species which was the object of the first K'kree war.

kirunka'rra: Army. Literally killers of vermin.

K'kree: Roughly, The great herd. The K'kree term for themselves.

K'kreer!: (Uncommon.) Modification of the plural K'kree to indicate a lone K'kree.

k'krir!': Literally twisted wrong. K'kree term for sick or insane individual.

k'krr: Herd. The basic unit of all K'kree social orders.

k'krurrin: "Family council" of senior K'kree within a large herd

which runs the family's affairs under the direction of the herd's lord.

kritur: Day. A K'kree measure of time, corresponding to 28.6 Terran hours. It is the rotational period of Kirur, the K'kree homeworld.

k'rrick'chr: K'kree juveniles within a herd. Literally "of-the-females," a reference to the fact that they are the sole responsibility of the herd females.

krurruna: Literally boss or bosses. Under-leaders of a K'kree herd. Also (differentiated by a subtle stress on the word) the supreme council, under the *Ghik'keerlk'ak T't'tkahk Xeng* Kirr, which administers the affairs of the Two Thousand Worlds.

kt!: Untranslatable expression of strong disgust, like the Galanglic "bah!," or "that stinks!," only stronger. It is pronounced with three distinct syllables: "K" followed by "T" followed by a single sharp clucking sound.

kt!! g'naak hkuu: There is no exact translation, but the meaning is approximately "you think/behave/stink like a carnivore." This may be the most deadly insult in the K'kree tongue; it's a great way to start a fight.

l'llurik: Workers. The servant caste of K'kree culture.

luretir!girr: Very roughly, "the Scatterings." The word seems to be derived from a K'kree agricultural term which refers to seeds planted in a field by scattering them on the wind. Luretir!girr Sector lies between the sectors of X'kug — most of which lies within the boundaries of the two Thousand Worlds — and the human-dominated sector of Gateway. Several small, multisystem states within the sector are dominated by K'kree clans and outcolonies which are self-governing, rather than owing allegiance to Kirur. Among them is the Empire of Xuruk.

nagr'axkiinak: The shadowed time of nightmare. One of the epic periods of remote K'kree history, referring to the time leading up to the genocidal war against the original G'naak. Also referred to as "the cloaked time," or "the time we do not think about," this period nevertheless has left a deep impression on modern K'kree.

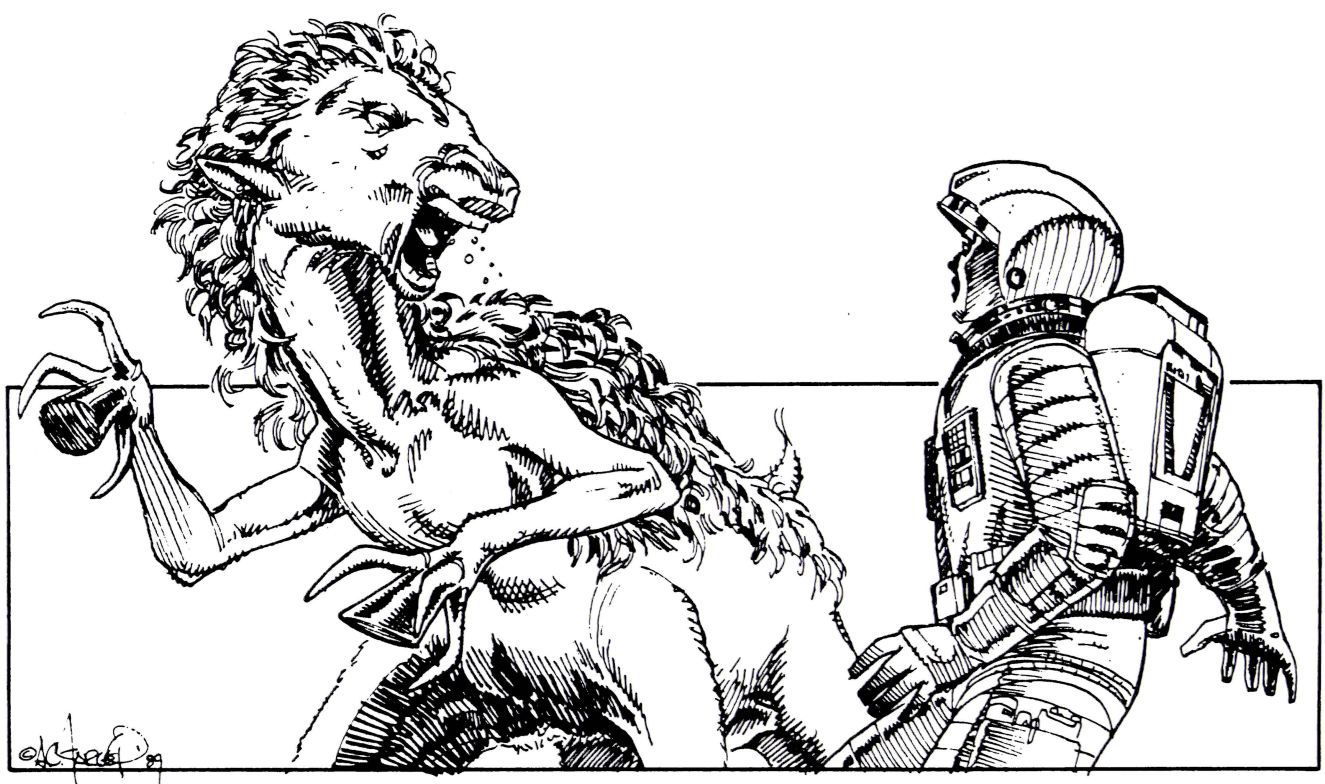
nagr'ika'rrgaa: The time of shed blood. The period mentioned in K'kree myth and legend when the herds first banded together to exterminate the original G'naak from Kirur.

nak: Shades of the night, a reference to inhabitants of a K'kree shadow world which descend with the night to feed on the living. The word now refers to violent dreams or nightmares, especially those where the dreamer is fleeing a powerful and vicious pursuer.

naruch: Literally "wall," a defensive perimeter. Now referring to K'kree soldiers or herd security forces, the term probably goes back to a time when young males guarded the nomad encampment at night.

pim!bigr: Year. A K'kree measure of time, corresponding to 440 Terran days. It is the orbital period of Kirur about the K'kree sun.

pkri!r: The mane of coarse, long hair which covers a K'kree's head, extending as a spinal ruff from neck to mid-torso. The cut



and ornamentation of the mane defines a K'kree's position within the herd.

rIng'r: K'kree military platoon, consisting of 50 K'kree.

rr'cheer!: Herd mistress (literally Lord of the Females). The senior female in a K'kree family unit.

rr'chkr: Adult females, or wives. K'kree culture acknowledges only juvenile females and married ones.

ruu: Harmony. K'kree concept embodying the perfect order, under the principles of self-evident rightness (xt'nir) and guraa (reason). An idyllic picture of a universe where all carnivorous life forms have been eliminated, the omnivores have been retrained, and the K'kree rule with dignity over a creation which has been refashioned along right and reasonable lines.

trakeek: A K'kree measure of time, corresponding to 25.8 seconds. The K'kree equivalent of minute.

T't'tkahk Xeng Klrr: Literally two thousand worlds. Commonly translated as creation, night sky or universe. A complex K'kree term indicating the whole of creation as represented by all that can be seen. There is a deeper psychological meaning in the phrase stemming from the K'kree notion that they control all that they can see, i.e., the (roughly) two thousand stars that can be seen in Kirur's night sky. By literally translating this rather abstract meaning, Two Thousand Worlds has come to refer to K'kree-dominated space.

Ur'traa I' Gnur: The Fearful Time. The brief period from about K'kree year 3200 to 3220, during which time the K'kree, driven by fear of the Kirrixurian G'naak, solved the secrets of fusion power and grav drive. It ended with the invasion of Kirrixur and the destruction of the G'naak.

xaar: Thunder. Specifically, the thundering sound of large numbers of K'kree on the move; hence, the word is generally used to mean power, especially power over non-K'kree governments or species.

Xaar'keer!: Lords of Thunder. Term given to a militant alliance of K'kree warlords known for their adherence to the precepts of Axavktrr xur, the right of the K'kree to survival through the genocide of alien species.

xagha: Literally "refreshment." In ancient times, a defended place on the route of march where a K'kree herd would stop for a time for rest. In time, the word took on the meaning of a place of spiritual refreshment and referred to a kind of portable enclosure set up within the camp. Carrying definite religious connotations, the xagha has been called a "temple camp" by human authorities. Artifacts, weapons, and writings — links with K'kree history — are displayed within the temple as reminders of the K'kree way and destiny.

xrak: Archaic K'kree polearm, measuring approximately three meters in length and mounting both a spear point and a curved chopping blade. Originally developed to fight carnivorous predators on Kirur, it now is a traditional weapon carried for ceremonial or ritual purposes.

Xtengir: The first steppelord civilization. Named for the Xtengir uplands of Kirur.

xt'neer: "Rightness of place." K'kree word for the caste system which defines each K'kree's place in his or her herd.

xt'nir: Rightness. Specifically, that which is self-evidently right, with no need for explanation or reason.

xuruk: Herd collective, consisting of several herds in a given geographical area, ruled by a Ghik'keer!k (steppelord). Xuruk are the basis for K'kree cities, merchant guilds, and industrial collectives. Also applied to the herds which may dominate several worlds.

"Xuruk Empire": Human shortening of the term Xuruk'xaar'keer!, and a misnomer (see: xuruk). A K'kree-dominated empire lying outside the recognized boundaries of the Two Thousand Worlds.

xurxeer!k: A collective of xuruk, usually within a single area. The human equivalent would be a country, but in K'kree terms a better designation would be "group of cities," and it carries the connotation of a number of cities related by trade routes and products. It can also be applied to several interrelated industries: mines, transport systems, and steel mills, for example. In common usage, it can mean an interstellar empire of many worlds.

!kee: Principal family of K'kree language dialects and the lingua franca of most K'kree worlds and trade routes. The K'kree have only a single language, but space and time has created numerous dialects. All are harsh and difficult language for humans, filled with clicks, glottal stops, and clacks. Nonetheless, a few humans have mastered !kee through the use of artificial language devices. It is spoken by perhaps half of the inhabitants of Kirur and by most space-faring K'kree.

!r: K'kree modifier indicating singular. Thus, K'kree becomes K'kree!r. Unlike Galanglic, most basic K'kree words are group or plural forms (for instance, "rocks" as a group, rather than "rock" as a single object. The modifier indicates singularity.

REFEREE'S NOTE: Pronunciation of K'kree Words

Many sounds in the K'kree language have no exact equivalents in English or Galanglic. A complete guide to K'kree pronunciation is provided in Alien Module Two, the K'kree, from GDW.

A few basic rules are provided here:

- ' represents a glottal stop.
- ! is a clacking sound made with the tongue against the roof of the mouth.
- !! is a double click, like a "giddy-up" sound made to a horse.
- rr is a rolled r.
- Double vowels are the same as single vowels, but longer.
- XK is pronounced like the xc in "boxcar."
- XR is pronounced like the xer in "boxer."
- XT is pronounced like the xed in "boxed."
- KT is pronounced like the cht in the German nacht.
- CH is a difficult sound halfway between the ch of nacht and a gargle in the back of the throat.

THE G'NAAK

LORDS OF THINDER: RACES OF THE SECTOR

G'naak is a K'kree word usually translated as meat-eater or carnivore, though it has, in fact, a wide range of associated meanings for the K'kree. The word is closely related to both nak (literally "shades of the night," probably a violent dream or nightmare) and gaa'ak (literally "steaming blood," and usually translated as death), and may be a deliberate composite of the two — a nightmare of death and hot blood. No K'kree can say or hear the word without a measure of deep-seated, psychological revulsion.

Use of the word in the various K'kree dialects can reflect different meanings, depending on usage and situation. G'naak, in K'kree usage, can refer to any of the following:

• Any carnivore. The term is applied to all of the carnivorous species native to Kirur which were exterminated tens of thousands of years ago, as well as meat-eating species encountered on other worlds.

• An expression of extreme distaste, actually an insult. It is never directed against other K'kree but is reserved for other species (such as humans) with questionable (i.e., meat-eating) habits. The K'kree phrase Kt!! g'naak hkuu can be translated roughly as "you stink (and therefore act) like a carnivore." This may be the most deadly insult in the K'kree tongue.

• A term denoting blood and death, associated with a K'kree concept which might be translated as "hell."

• The K'kree bogeymen of their early history, presumably a technic civilization native to or dwelling on Kirur's moon, now extinct.

Usually specifically identified as the G'naak, the technological civilization exterminated over five thousand years ago has been the object of considerable fascination for the K'kree ever since, shaping their history, their psychology, and their relations with other cultures.

Almost nothing is known about this race. A fragmentary skeleton uncovered at Charr'chaariv on Kirur has been preserved and is on display at Kalaghee outside Kirur's capital. The remains, still embedded in rock-hard dried mud, suggest a six-limbed creature standing perhaps 1.3 meters tall. Little can be told from the skull, which was crushed and is partly missing, but fragments of the lower jaw show multiple rows of triangular, razor-edged teeth. Human sophontologists who have seen the specimen are divided in their opinion. It is assumed that the creature was intelligent because fragments of silver bands can be discerned on the forelimbs. Opponents suggest that the creature could have been a pet wearing ornamentation, though this interpretation must be considered extremely unlikely in the light of modern K'kree psychology. The Charr'chaariv Skeleton is held in almost religious awe by the K'kree as a relic of their Nagr'axk ee nak, and they will not permit scientific investigation or reconstruction.

Various other skeletal fragments have been uncovered, both on Kirur and on Kirrixur, but these are in such bad states of preservation it is impossible to determine if they are even of the same species as the Charr'chaariv Skeleton without chemical analysis — which, of course, is forbidden by K'kree authorities.

The Charr'chaariv Skeleton, unfortunately, gives no clues to the greatest mystery concerning the G'naak: the origin of this enigmatic culture.

THEORIES OF G'NAAK ORIGINS

There are today three main theories about where the G'naak came from and how they may have interrelated with the K'kree.

• **The Kirrixur Hypothesis:** This theory holds that the G'naak are native to Kirur's moon, Kirrixur — and did not come into conflict with the K'kree until after K'kree year 3200. Historical mentions of G'naak on Kirur prior to the K'kree development of spaceflight are references to nonsapient, native carnivorous life forms exterminated during the Nagr'ika'rrgaa over thirty thousand years ago.

Favoring this hypothesis are early K'kree records of the warfare occurring on Kirrixur, including documentation of their remarkable development of antigravity propulsion and spaceflight within a period of only twenty-five years. Certain artifacts and ruins on Kirrixur are said to be remnants of G'naak technology. Opposing the theory is the extreme unlikeliness of two intelligent species native to the same system, one on a planet, another on that planet's satellite.

• **The Second Race Hypothesis:** This theory states that the G'naak were originally native to Kirur, appearing during the same general period as the K'kree. At some point in Kirur's prehistory, a number of them managed to escape K'kree genocide and settle on Kirrixur, possibly using primitive rockets. Legends and folklore telling of warfare against meat-eating creatures during prehistoric times are memories of that earlier war.

In favor of this theory are certain K'kree traditions and the Charr'chaariv skeleton, evidence which suggest that the G'naak were, like the K'kree hexapodal. The odds against two separate hexapodal intelligent life forms appearing simultaneously but separately, one on the planet, the other on that planet's moon, are extremely small. Against the theory is the survival and ultimate victory of the K'kree. If the K'kree were still primitives while the G'naak were building spacecraft, it is difficult to understand why the G'naak were exterminated. Too, there is no hard evidence for an advanced culture on Kirur prior to the development of K'kree technology.

• **The Interloper Hypothesis:** This idea suggests that the G'naak came from elsewhere in the universe, that the Kirrixur civilization — as well as any G'naak civilization on prehistoric Kirur, if it actually existed — was a colony of an early, space-faring culture.

This theory avoids some of the statistical problems inherent in assuming two sophont species appearing simultaneously on Kirur and Kirrixur, though a degree of coincidence remains if K'kree traditions about six-limbed G'naak are factual. The destruction of a technic civilization by primitives becomes reasonable if the G'naak presence on Kirur was limited to a few

colonies rather than a planet-wide civilization.

Against the Interloper Hypothesis is the absence of a G'naak homeworld. K'kree records, certainly, speak of numerous meat-eating cultures exterminated during their early period of interstellar exploration and conquest — all of them, confusingly, referred to as "G'naak" — but it seems likely that the K'kree would have made some special mention in their records if the original G'naak homeworld had been discovered. Further, extant K'kree records insist that Kirrixur was the original G'naak homeworld, while myths and legends from prehistoric times suggest that they were native to Kirur.

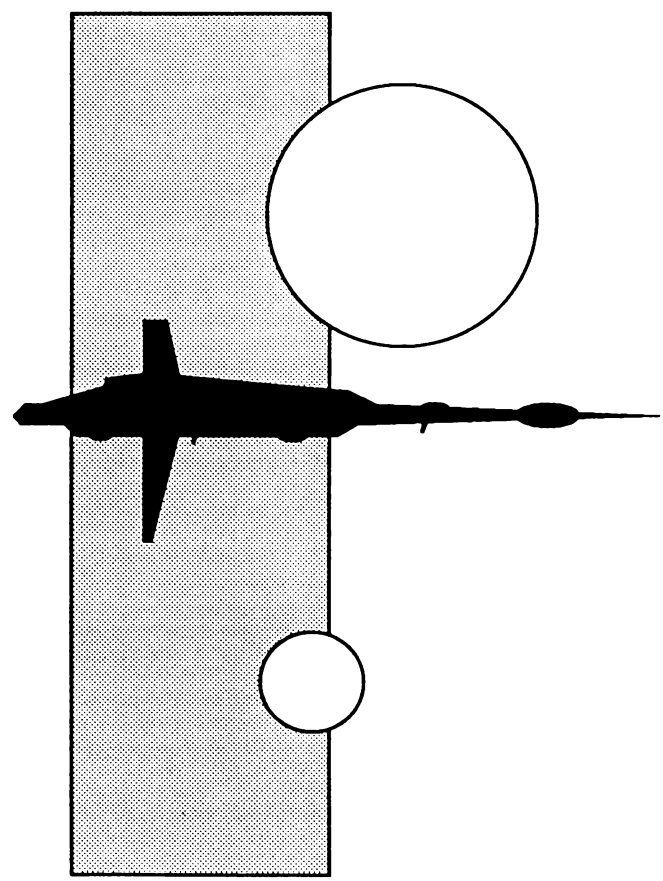
The Charr'chaariv Skeleton is the single most important piece of physical evidence concerning G'naak origins, but it offers no support to one theory over another. It was undeniably uncovered on Kirur, but this could mean it was native to the planet, that it was part of a temporary colony, or even that it had been brought to Kirur from Kirrixur as a prisoner or as a trophy.

Without further research — and a willingness on the part of K'kree authorities to permit such research — the truth will probably never be known. Most historians accept the Kirrixur Hypothesis as the correct one, pointing out that there is absolutely no evidence of two civilizations coexisting on Kirur in ancient times. What little evidence of the G'naak civilization there is — a few fragments of machinery and foundation walls, mostly — has been found solely on Kirur's satellite.

Advocates of the Interloper and Second Race theories insist that the Kirrixurian ecology is too limited to be native to the moon and believe that the moon is, in fact, the product of terraforming by some technological culture unknown. What very little is known about the G'naak — descriptions in K'kree epic legends and a few fragmentary skeletal remains — suggests that they were indeed hexapodal, and this in turn hints at a biological link with the K'kree. This could be coincidental — and must be assumed to be coincidence if the Interloper theory is correct — but the fact is suspicious and does call into question the idea that G'naak and K'kree are the products of completely separate and mutually alien worlds. There are hundreds of known biologies based on bilateral hexapodal somotypes — the Hivers are a case in point — but the chances of two such species appearing independently so close together — one on a world and the other on that same world's moon — are small.

Unfortunately, all that is known of the G'naak has come down to us through K'kree legends and fragmentary records over five thousand years old, and the K'kree, obviously, are less than objective as reporters when it comes to this subject. K'kree records agree that they were a technic civilization but disagree over whether they were capable of space travel. Certainly, traditions that the G'naak at one time inhabited Kirur until they were exterminated perhaps thirty thousand years ago suggests that the G'naak were space-faring at one time, though it is possible that they had lost this ability by the time the K'kree invaded Kirrixur some twenty-five thousand years later.

Unless further revelations are forthcoming — the discovery of the hypothetical G'naak homeworld, for example — it seems likely that the details about the G'naak will remain a mystery lost in the murk of galactic prehistory.



THE FAR TRADER

LORDS OF THUNDER: STARSHIP DECK PLANS

One of the most common ships involved in free trade throughout known space is the Type A2 Far Trader, a common sight at starports everywhere both within and beyond the Imperium's borders. Both the Aslan and the Vargr are known to have employed Far Traders for private commerce upon occasion.

In addition, more than one case is on record of pirates having converted Type A2s to carry additional weapons, often hidden behind the central cargo ramp. In this guise, Far Traders have been used successfully as Q-ships or raiders, using feigned distress signals or other ruses to get close aboard lightly armed cargo vessels, cripple and board them. Various star navies beyond Imperial borders have also used Far Traders as light, cost-efficient combat vessels. Though unable to stand for long against larger, heavily-armed and -armored military vessels, the Far Trader has been quite successful in system defense, courier, and anti-pirate roles among remote or isolated systems.

Far Trader (Type A2): Using the Type 200 hull, the Far Trader is capable of 1-G acceleration and jump-2. It has tankage for 50 tons of fuel and makes use of lateral fuel scoops and streamlining for skimming hydrogen from gas giant upper atmospheres. The vessel has a standard bridge equipped with a Model/1-bis computer and comes equipped with two weapons turrets, one to port, one to starboard. There are ten staterooms, supporting three crew members and six or seven passengers, plus four low berths. The ship comes equipped with an air raft in a forward locker and has a cargo capacity of 61 tons.

The Far Trader carries a crew of three: Pilot/navigator, engineer, and steward/medic. Vessels in hostile or pirate-infested areas usually carry two shipboard gunners as well.

Shipboard Details: The Far Trader is easily recognized by its squat, "paired-snout" design, arranged in two levels. Passenger spaces, fuel, power plant systems and part of the maneuver drive are on the upper deck. Cargo spaces, the bridge, jump drive and engineering spaces, weaponry, and maneuver systems are on the lower deck.

The bridge is located in the starboard "snout," encased in a characteristic strut-braced greenhouse canopy that gives the pilot fair vision forward and up but is especially designed to give him a clear view of cargo handling operations inboard. The bridge has two stations, arranged side by side.

Abaft the bridge is the computer room and a spare stateroom. Though designed as a duty room for shipboard crew, many captains have converted the stateroom to carry a seventh passenger. A common area farther aft is used as a crew lounge and as a reception area or quarterdeck when the ship is in port.

Crew quarters are located on the lower deck, port side forward, just aft of the large and relatively luxurious captain's cabin in the port snout. Large view screens in the port snout inboard hull give the captain/master a clear view of cargo loading and handling operations in port or in space.

Six passenger staterooms are located on the upper deck forward, together with a large recreation/common area and galley. Grav plates in all passenger areas can be individually set for any gravity from .1 to 2.0 Gs, according to passenger preferences. The ship is designed with security in mind, restricting passengers from vital shipboard areas aft or on the lower deck. Unfortunately, this arrangement is frequently violated by captains who, seeking to raise additional revenue, convert the lower deck duty room to passenger space. It is possible that more than one Far Trader has been lost do to this relatively common breach of basic shipboard security.

The center of the ship's lower deck is taken up by the 61-ton cargo bay. Fuel is carried in the 50-ton tankage space above the cargo deck. A cargo ramp forward of the main cargo bay lowers for planetside loading. Grappling mechanisms mounted between the twin snouts facilitate cargo handling, especially in zero-G. The operation can be controlled either from the bridge or from the master's/captain's cabin.

Large cargo locks are also located to both port and starboard, just aft of the turrets.

Four low berths are located portside aft, off the port side passageway connecting the crew's quarters with the drive spaces. The ship's locker is located in the corresponding space to starboard, and contains weapons, survival gear, environmental suits, tools, and other gear.

Weapons: The standard weapons mix for the Far Trader consists of two dual-laser turrets. Many Free Traders, however, have been modified to carry one laser, one missile launcher, and one sandcaster in each turret, providing the vessel with a flexible weapons posture for any combat situation.

Some pirate or converted military Type 2's mount an additional jury-rigged weapon, often in the air raft or forward cargo hatch. While these tend to vary widely, the usual choice is a fixed barbette mount, limited-traverse laser controlled from the bridge.

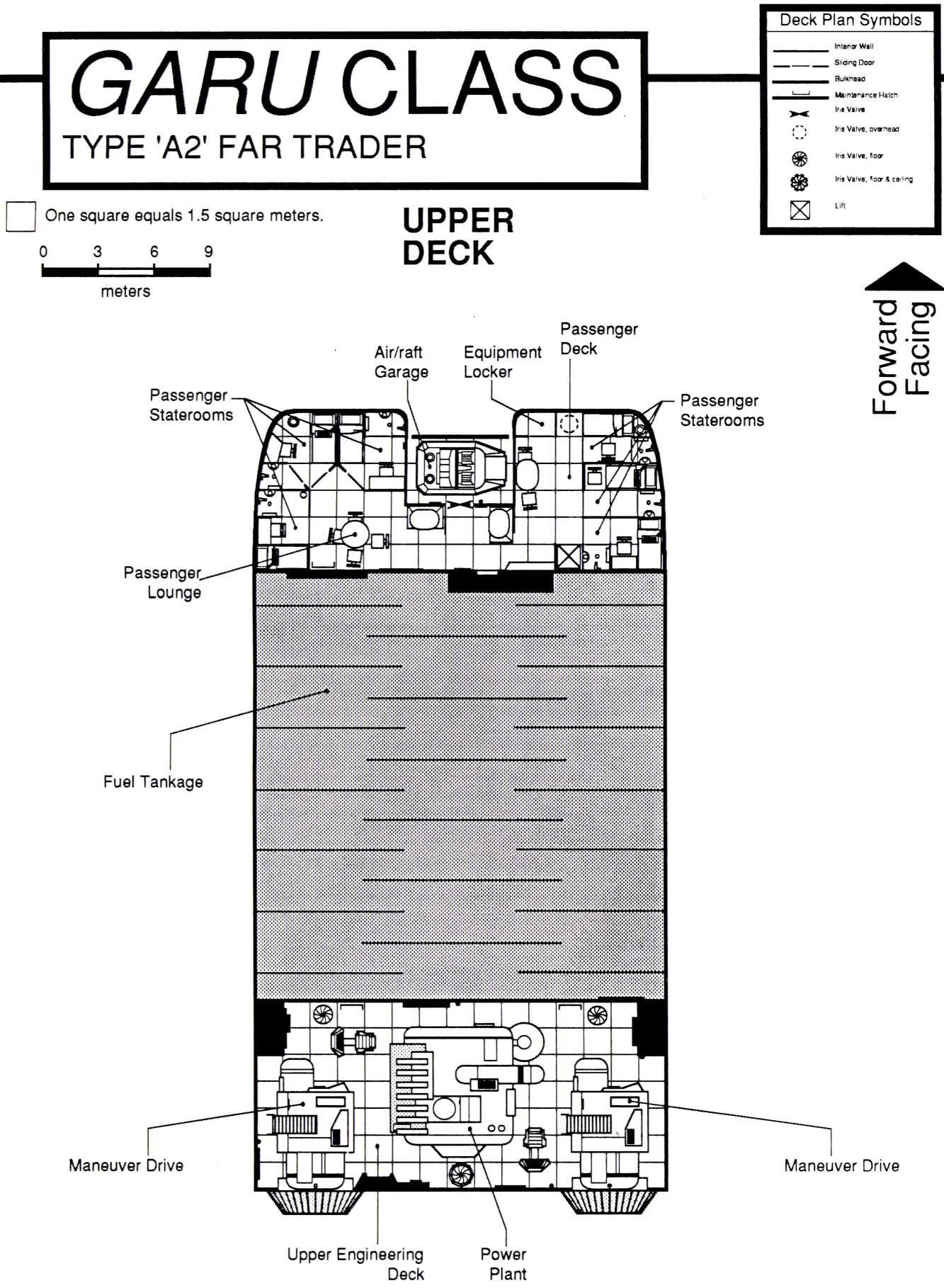
Air/Raft: The ship carries a standard air raft in a berth mounted on the upper deck above the forward cargo loading ramp. It masses four tons, has an average cruising speed of 100 kph and is capable of short bursts at 150 kph. An anti-gravity sled, it can lift up to four tons. It is capable of sub-orbital flight in an emergency, an operation which requires approximately six hours, and has full life support and pressure suits for all passengers.

Costs and Revenues: Unfortunately, the A2 Far Trader is not known as a cost-efficient commercial operator. Monthly payments for the A2 average Cr275,729, while crew salaries, berthing fees, life support, and other costs amount to some Cr60,714 per month. Fuel costs, when gas giant skimming is not possible, amount to some Cr5,000 per jump. With only 61 tons of cargo space, the A2 can expect to gross only about Cr242,000 per month, assuming a full cargo bay (figured at Cr1000 per ton), and a full complement of middle-berth and low berth passengers. Many captains engage in market speculation to make up the difference, seeking to purchase cargos greatly in demand at their next port of call. Many skippers run special charter flights between regular trade runs to earn extra income.

Variants on the basic design sacrifice the jump-2 capability and some fuel tankage to increase the cargo capacity to 81 tons.

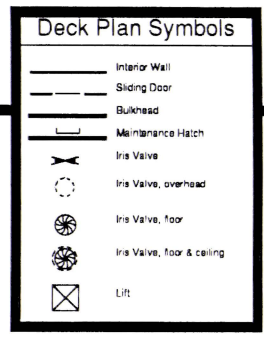
GARU CLASS

TYPE 'A2' FAR TRADER



GARU CLASS

TYPE 'A2' FAR TRADER



One square equals 1.5 square meters.

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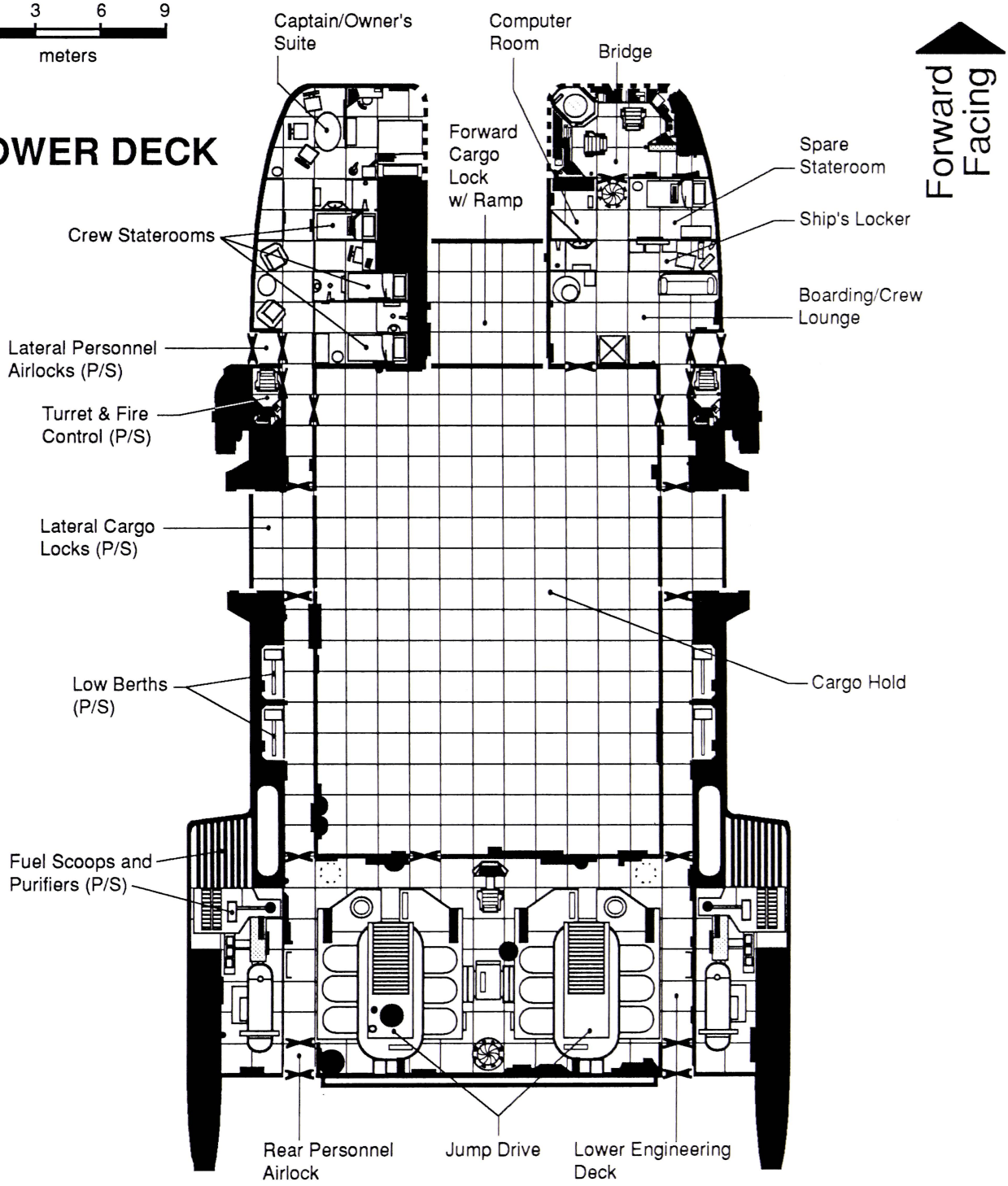
meters

LOWER DECK



TABLET OF THE DAWN

LORDS OF THUNDER: MISCELLANEOUS BACKGROUND

During the course of the adventure, the characters will be approached by Enli Visirichurva, an adventurer and dealer in alien antiquities. Visirichurva will ask the characters to provide him with transportation to Gateway, where an expert on K'kree language and culture can be found to translate an inscription he has acquired.

When questioned about the inscription, Visirichurva will be secretive, explaining only that it came into his possession "some way off to trailing, near the border with the Two Thousand Worlds." The inscription, he insists, is of little real value, but he hopes to get a translation in order to determine its resale value to Imperial museums or collectors.

At some point during the adventure, the referee should allow the players to see the inscription. Visirichurva may allow them to see it after his relationship with the player characters deepens, after, for example, a thwarted assassination attempt or an attempted boarding by hostile spacecraft. Alternatively, the players may sneak into Visirichurva's quarters while he is absent or examine his belongings after his death.

The Tablet

Visirichurva keeps the inscription inside a small, locked trunk — like an old-time sea chest — of acanis wood. Usually it is in his possession, though at times he will leave it locked inside his quarters aboard ship, or within a bank or hotel safe when he is planetside. The trunk is small, measuring 30 by 20 by 40 centimeters, is equipped with a carrying handle, and weighs about 8 kilos.

Opening the case is a task.

To open locked case:

Routine, Intrusion, Dex, 12 sec

Referee: Unskilled characters can force the lock without difficulty, but the lock will be ruined and there will be no way to disguise the fact that the case has been opened.

The inside of the box is lined with foam padding shaped to hold a rectangular stone tablet.

The tablet measures approximately 31 by 23 by 6 centimeters, and weighs 5 kilos. It consists of dried mud baked to a stone-hard consistency. Markings are discernible on the upper face, and impressions along the edges show where it was once mounted by metal brackets.

Characters with experience with the K'kree, their language, and their culture will immediately recognize the markings as K'kree writing, but even characters who speak !kee will be unable to interpret them. The markings are an extremely old form of K'kree writing dating back tens of thousands of years. Each discrete mark is a single ideograph, consisting of a half-moon shaped depression surrounded by several wavy lines. As scribes of ancient Sumer on Earth pressed a reed stylus into clay to make the pictographs of cuneiform writing, ancient K'kree pressed their "hoof-thumbs" into wet clay, then marked the clay with their flexible fingers. The reader placed his own hoof-thumb into the depression and traced the finger marks as he read, beginning at the tablet's lower right, then proceeding up the tablet face, alternating left to right with right to left. Called Gikhakh, this was the precursor of modern K'kree writing.

Visirichurva will never admit where or how he got the tablet, and it is obvious that, despite his protestations, he considers it to be valuable. The evident interest of others in

the artifact during the course of the adventure will suggest that they consider it valuable as well.

After Visirichurva's death, the player characters should be allowed to find or recover the tablet. Following up on information recorded in Visirichurva's personal computer, they will learn the name and address of Dr. Jamis Feshna Garwood of the Gateway Xenoarchaeological Foundation, Gateway, a respected expert in ancient K'kree languages.

Garwood will recognize the inscription as ancient K'kree writing. Though he cannot read it himself, a linguistic program available through the Gateway data net will be able to scan the tablet and produce the following translation:

IN YEAR OF [ ] OF RIGHTNESS CAME TO [ ] THE APPEARANCE OF FIRE. DAWN CAME RED [ ] THE SKIES, AND SEAS RAGED [OVERTURNING?] LAND IN THUNDER [FOR WHICH?] THIS INSCRIPTION IS RAISED THAT ALL MIGHT KNOW AND REMEMBER AND [SHAKE?] LO [ ] REDEEMED AND BE FULL. THE WONDER OF ALL THAT IS WONDERFUL AND [COMPLETE?] MANIFESTED BY LIGHT OF FLAME AND SUN. BEHOLD IN THE YEAR [ ] TWO MOONS REIGNED IN HEAVENS WHERE BEFORE [KIRRIXUR?] REIGNED ALONE. AND TO MOTHER KIRUR CAME FURTHER WONDER BUT [ ] COMING OF [NAGR'AXKIINAK? NIGHTMARE?]. [ ] FOR THE HERD AND THE BLOOD-DEATH-FEASTING OF DEMONS. [G'NAAK] WALKED THE MOTHER LAND, AND BLOOD STEAMED ON THE PRAIRIES. SIX [LIMBS? LEGS?] HAD THEY, LIKE UNTO THOSE OF REASON, [BUT WITH] SAVAGE AND BLOOD-STAINED [BODIES?] COVERED IN [ARMOR PLATES? SCALES?] [ ] UNTIL THE YEAR [ ] AND SANG AMONG [ ] AND FOREVER. FOREVER SHALL [ ] AND KEEP [ ] [NAGR'AXKIINAK? NIGHTMARE?] DEMANDED [NAGR'IKA'RRGAA? BLOODSHED?] IN [COMPLETENESS? FULLNESS? TIME?] OF THE MOONS ABOVE. THEN CAME [ ] IN FIVE [ ] THE NEW MOON DEPARTED, A SWORD OF LIGHT [COMET?] VANISHING IN THREE DAYS INTO CONSTELLATION [OF GHR'RR] FOR THENCE [INSCRIPTION INTERRUPTED BY DAMAGE.]

Surface damage and chipping has made parts of the tablet illegible, and one end has broken off, ending what was obviously once a longer narrative. Other words and phrases are untranslatable, leaving gaps in the translated inscription. Some phrases are ambiguous, and several possible translations are supplied.

The phrase "Constellation of Ghr'rr" is particularly interesting, because it refers to a constellation — as seen from the surface of the K'kree homeworld — which still exists under that name.

The K'kree, like many sentient species, divide the stars of their night sky into imaginary pictures, or constellations. Rather than give them the names of mythical animals or beings, however, they assign some two hundred groupings of stars to the rule of as many legendary K'kree heroes, a practice allied with their concept of the "Two Thousand Worlds" — the stars of the night sky — belonging to the K'kree. "Ghr'rr" is one such hero, credited with leading the assault on the last G'naak stronghold on Kirur.

Garwood calls the inscription the Tablet of the Dawn, based on the first part of the translation which refers to something important happening at dawn, together with the fact that the events described appear to have taken place at the dawn of K'kree history. It is his belief that the tablet was once part of a public inscription, possibly adorning the facade of some sort of memorial. Proton decay dating methods give the tablet an age of twenty-eight thousand years, plus or minus five thousand. Garwood believes the inscription is extremely valuable and requires further study. On behalf of the Gateway Xenoarchaeological Foundation, he will offer the characters Cr500,000 for the tablet.

Referee's Note: Little practical information can be gleaned from the tablet. It may occur to the characters to try to track down the reference to the "Constellation of Ghr'rr." This will require a check with the Gateway Astronomical Institute, which maintains computer programs listing all surveyed stars, including those of K'kree space. Dr. Garwood can provide a program which describes the appearance of the two hundred K'kree constellations. Further data is available on the apparent movement of the stars visible in Kirur's skies in 28,000 years. To cross-index the two is a task:

To correlate data from astronomical programs:
Routine, Computer, Edu, 15 min, Safe

Successful completion of the program will give the characters an interesting answer. The Constellation of Ghr'rr occupies a part of Kirur's sky which includes that volume of space, almost three hundred parsecs away, now known as the Gateway Sector.

VISIRICHURVA'S LETTER

At some point during their association with Visirichurva, the archaeologist will give the characters a sealed letter for safekeeping, asking that if anything happens to him, they deliver it to Dr. Garwood of the Xenoarchaeological Foundation on Gateway.

Should the characters open the envelope's seal, they will find a single piece of notepaper, on which are printed the words "I have it — V."

Should the characters think to examine the letter very closely, using extreme magnification, they will find a microdot hidden within the word "it." Electronic enlargement of the dot will reveal a detailed 3-D holograph of the Tablet of the Dawn.

Referee's Note: The letter is included as a safeguard against the possibility that the tablet could be lost during the course of the adventure without the players having the chance to photograph it. If they get the letter back to Gateway, Dr. Garwood will find the holograph and be able to make a translation from that.

REFEREE'S SPECIAL NOTE: STEALING THE TABLET

Unless the player characters lose it along the way — or decide to sell it to someone other than Dr. Garwood, the Tablet of the Dawn will be stolen from a Foundation safe by the K'kree Grek and several human assistants. The theft of the tablet should alert the characters (if they have not figured it out already) to the fact that the K'kree are determined to track down all evidence which could lead to the G'naak of their legends. In conversation with the characters, Grek may discount rumors that the G'naak are real and that they have established a homeworld somewhere within Gateway Sector, but the characters should be allowed to discover the truth for themselves.

Several parts of the puzzle will present themselves:

• Grek has, for several weeks, shown considerable interest in the anatomies of various non-human races within the sector. Gateway's xenobiological library will have records of his queries, and a librarian will remember his interest as he searched for references to six-limbed species.

• If the characters search Grek's office spaces after he flees, they will find computer files copied from Gateway's library records. The files include descriptions of Trevannic (2219) and the Droashav.

• If questioned closely, Mari Jollynn will admit that Grek showed considerable interest in her Droashav bodyguards, questioning her about their origin. Jollynn is uncomfortable talking about them and lied to Grek about their homeworld, but she has a feeling the centaur did not believe her.

• The GSI can trace Grek's starship. He will not have filed a flight plan, but a trace will show that it fled Gateway following the Gateway-Sardis run. Navigational records uncovered in Grek's offices will include approach and navigational information on both Xabthar and Silest, in the Renkard Union. It will take 13 weeks to make the trip at Jump-2.

Depending on the skills available to the player characters, the referee can have them break Grek's coded computer files, or they can simply discover the information in a search of records he left behind.

Also depending on the situation, the referee may allow the characters to become involved in a firefight when Grek and his cohorts break into the Foundation spaces. If the characters are nearby, they might discover something amiss (security guards missing, security cameras put out of action) and investigate. Should they get into a firefight, Grek will get away with the tablet whatever they do, making his way directly to Gateway's starport and escaping in his waiting ship. The speed of his escape may explain why his records are so easily discovered: he'd planned to return and dispose of them after the theft but was prevented from doing so by the characters.

Finally, and again depending on the sequence of events thus far in the adventure, either Grek's escape can lead the characters to Trevannic, or it can occur after they have already discovered Trevannic for themselves. In either case, the referee should assume that it will take some time — several weeks at least — for the K'kree to organize a military expedition to Trevannic. This will give the characters time to assemble their own fleet — or to organize an expedition to Trevannic to learn why Grek was so interested in the place. Once there, of course, they will find pirates, the Droashav, and the mysteries of Trevannic Alpha.

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DISCOVERIES

LORDS OF THUNDER: OTHER LIBRARY DATA

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

A number of secrets exist within the Gateway Sector, secrets which the player characters can uncover and use, either for profit or to solve other mysteries in the adventure. Since some of these secrets are tangled, obscure, or otherwise less-than-obvious, they are presented plainly here.

• Mari Jollynn of Jollynnstar Enterprises on Gateway is, in fact, a former pirate who served first with the Kotar Brotherhood and later with the Castran Marauders. For the past eighteen years, she has been Raynan Tal's eyes and ears on Gateway, providing the Marauders with the cargos and destinations of freighters and liners leaving Gateway on the Gateway-Sardis Run. She became wealthy by laundering Marauder money through a chain of legitimate businesses in the Galian Federation, including, ironically, Salurian Lines.

She has heard through her contacts that the K'kree are searching for their old nemesis, the G'naak. Further, she suspects that the Droashav of Trevannic may be the G'naak of K'kree legend; years ago she entered the Hall of the Ages in Trevannic Alpha and saw holographic scenes linking the modern Droashav to the K'kree homeworld and the bitter wars there. Aware that the K'kree are searching for clues to Trevannic's identity, she has learned of the existence of the Tablet of Dawn and suspects that it may have the clues the K'kree need to identify the world. Since the destruction of Trevannic would also destroy a major pirate base and her own source of income, she is desperate to prevent the tablet from falling into K'kree hands.

• The Tablet of the Dawn is a fragment from the facade of a K'kree temple dating back some 27,000 years to the time when the G'naak were exterminated on Kirur and the surviving Droashav/G'naak either retired to Kirur's moon or fled the system in their asteroid starship. It records the appearance of a second moon in the skies above Kirur and the coming of the G'naak, as well as the departure of the moon toward a particular part of Kirur's night sky.

It is now an object of nearly religious veneration for the K'kree of the Xuruk Empire, who had it with them in a xagha or temple on Xabthar. Further, it was one of several artifacts which were suspected of harboring clues to the possible location of surviving G'naak. Enli Visirichurva stole it, and the K'kree have been pursuing him and the tablet ever since.

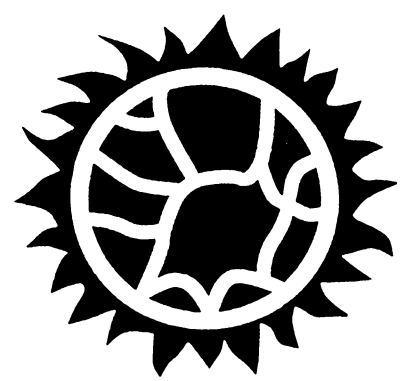
• The big secret of the sector, and the point of the entire campaign: the Droashav of Trevannic are the descendents of the G'naak of K'kree legend. Trevannic is not their original homeworld but is the world they arrived at after the K'kree conquest of Kirrixur. The Charr'chaariv Skeleton is the skeleton of a juvenile Droashav killed millennia ago on Kirur, which explains the differences in size (1.3 meters for the skeleton, 1.8 meters for an adult Droashav.)

• Linked to the *big secret* above, Trevannic Alpha (ES00410-A), the moon of Trevannic, is in fact a generation starship used by the Droashav to cross space from Kirur to Trevannic millennia ago. The ancestral Droashav, the G'naak, used the moon to travel to Kirur in the first place, and its appearance in the skies of the K'kree homeworld inspired the mysterious lines in the Tablet of the Dawn about a second moon in the skies of Kirur.

Called Vrad by the Droashav, it was abandoned when they occupied Trevannic and forgotten in the generations of warfare and struggle which followed, save as a mythic symbol of their far-ranging past. It is now occupied by several hundred pirates, who are using one of the vast, underground docking bays as living quarters.

• The K'kree merchant Xkluur'gh'grek, known as "Grek," lives in Gateway with his family, outwardly presenting himself as a trade representative from Kirur and assisting the Xenoarchaeological Foundation in K'kree-related research. He is reasonably friendly and outgoing for a K'kree, insisting that understanding between the races is necessary for mutual profit. He professes to hate the splinter government called the Xaar'keer!.

In fact, Grek is an agent of the Xuruk Empire, searching for clues to the location of the new G'naak homeworld. In the course of the adventure, he will obtain astronomical data pinpointing Trevannic's position, steal the Tablet of the Dawn, and flee to Xabthar on the far side of the sector. Later he will reappear aboard the K'kree flagship, threatening to bombard Trevannic into radioactive rubble.



TREVANNIC

Trevannic (Vishar IV)

Stellar Data
Star: Vishar; Class: F5V; Mass: 1.3 std; Luminosity: 3.5 std; Radius: 1.4 std.

Planetary Data
Trevannic (Vishar IV): Diameter: 12,860 km; Density: .95 std; Mass: .95 std; Gravity: .95 G; Distance: 1.6 au; Period: 1.77 years: 1y 281d 5h 52m 48s; Orbital Eccentricity: .010; Axial Tilt: 22° 15' 32"; Albedo: .46; Rotational Period: 17h 45m 23.4s.
Hydrographic Percentage: 61%; Composition: Liquid H_2O.
Base Temperature: 56°C.
Atmosphere: N_2 78.03%, O_2 20.94%, Ar 0.92% H2O 0.05-0.09%, CO_2 340 pp, Ne 18.3 ppm, He 5.56 pp, SO_2 1.5 ppm, Other trace gases < 1 ppm; Atmospheric Pressure at Sea Level: 1.1 bar: 736 mm/Hg.
• ***Special Note:*** The atmosphere, while a standard oxygen-nitrogen mix at standard pressure, frequently contains a high percentage of wind-blown grit and sand that can be toxic if inhaled over a long period of time. The native Droashav are adapted to the condition and need no special protection, though during sandstorms they wear cloth scarves across their faces. Humans can breathe the air unprotected for a short time. For longer periods (several hours or more) filter masks are necessary.

Satellite Data
Trevannic Alpha (ES00410-A); Diameter: 301 km; Density: 2.4 g/cm³.
Mean Orbital Distance: 192,000 km; Orbital Eccentricity: .31: Farthest distance: 251,500 km; Nearest approach: 132,500 km; Orbital Period: 9.61 days: 9d 14h 38m 24s; Rotational period: 9.61 days (tide-lock with primary). No significant atmosphere

— Excerpted from A Pilot's Guide to the Gateway Sector 203rd Edition, Revised 1105, Gateway Station

TREVANNIC

Trevannic (2219 E876740-9) is a habitable world, drier and much hotter than Earth. The Tech level of 9 is somewhat misleading, since it refers not the the tech level commonly reached by the native inhabitants, but to the facilities at Dragonsbreath, the major pirate enclave on the planet's surface.

The natives are six-limbed pseudoreptilian beings descended from carnivore/pouncer stock. They are primitives. Most are barbarians with an approximate Tech Level 1 culture. An industrial civilization, called the Kavah (Kinsman) exists in the north polar latitudes with an approximate Tech Level of 4. Trade with the pirates has introduced numerous technological innovations, including breech-loading, lever action rifles.

The natives, who call themselves Droashav ("Wanderers"), are loosely organized into Vaalryk, or migratory tribes. The Kavah is ruled by an elected council, the Jaaroo, sometimes referred to as a "kinsmoot" since the council representatives take a blood-kin oath with one another when they meet. All Droashav tribes have cities — sprawling, riverside tangles of mud brick for the most part — but seem to prefer a nomadic life of travel, raiding, and tents. The cities are regarded solely as centers for commerce and periodic manufacturing, and many lie empty for much of the year. The people are fierce and warlike, taking great pride in the hunt and the kill. They have domesticated several Trevannian species to their use, including the goral — a scaly, four-legged riding beast — and the nuu — an antelope-like animal raised for food.

Curiously, the Droashav appear to be interlopers in the local ecology. All land animals on Trevannic except the Droashav are four-legged. A genetic study of Trevannian life would demonstrate that, while biologically compatible, the Droashav did not evolve from Trevannian life.

Trevannic has a single moon, an asteroid in a close elliptical orbit. From space, the asteroid appears to be a typically cratered and airless chunk of rock some hundreds of kilometers across. Called Trevannic Alpha, it is the location of a well-hidden Castran Marauder base. More details are given in the section entitled *Trevannic Alpha.*

Dragonsbreath

Dragonsbreath is a class-E frontier starport with few amenities. Facilities include a compound of buildings outfitted for human habitation, several warehouses, a dam and pumping station by a nearby river, and a huge aluminum tank (capacity 1,750,000 liters) used for storing water. Power is provided by a small fusion generator erected near the pumping plant.

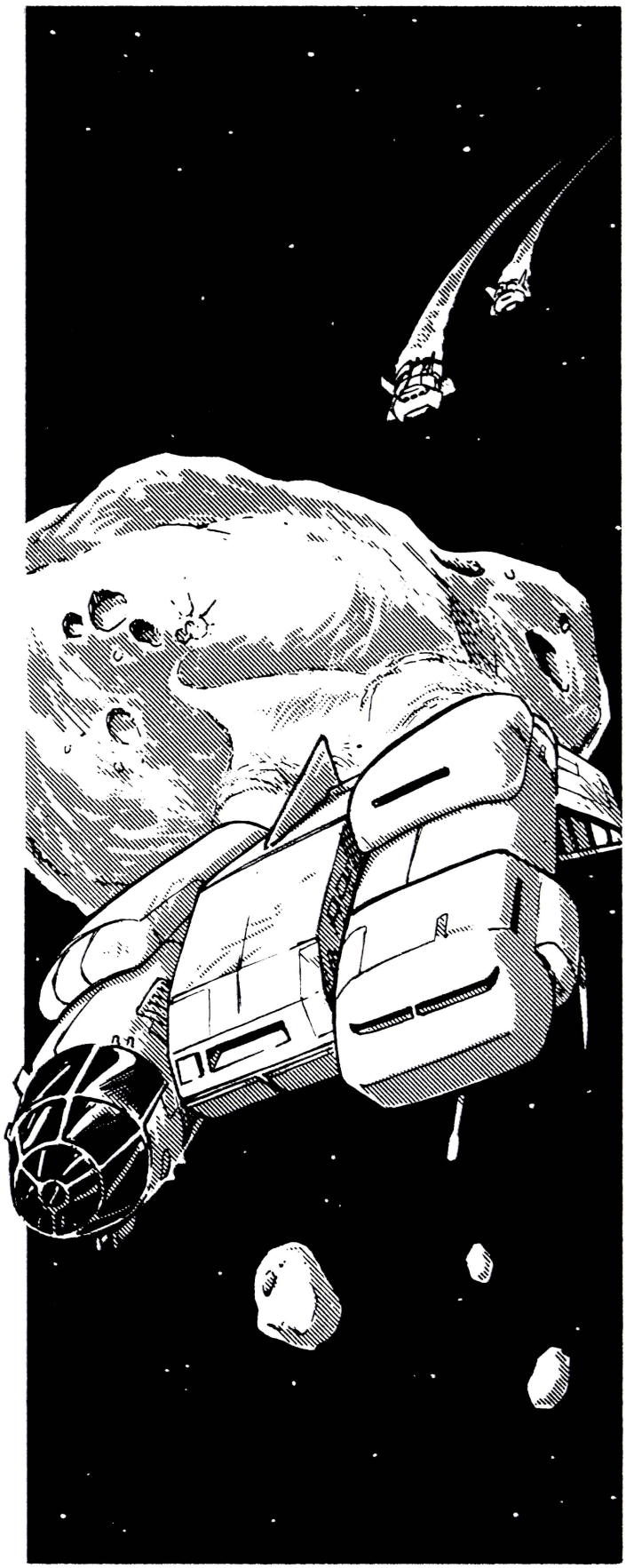
The land around Dragonsbreath is flat and open, with little cover and scant vegetation. The Gharrax'n River flows from the north and provides water for the pumping station and primitive fusion power plant. The entire pumping station/power plant complex is surrounded by a three-meter high electrified fence. The perimeter is patrolled by guards, both human and Droashav.

TREVANNIC ALPHA

Trevannic Alpha is the only moon of Trevannic, a 300-km asteroid in a highly elliptical orbit around its primary. Called Vrad by the natives, it has an orbital eccentricity of .31, approaching to within 135,000 kilometers at one end of its orbit and receding to over 250,000 kilometers four and a half days later. Trevannic Alpha is also unusual in that its orbit lies well outside the plane of Trevannic's orbit around its sun, being inclined almost 45° below the system's ecliptic. The moon's close approach is over Trevannic's northern hemisphere; its periplanetos is over the southern hemisphere.

The Pirate Base: Trevannic Alpha is honeycombed by underground tunnels, passageways, and chambers, dug out of solid rock millennia ago by the distant ancestors of the Droashav.

Many of these have been adapted by the Castran Marauders. A seemingly bottomless crater in fact opens into an underground chamber hundreds of meters across, where pirate starships and occasional captured liners or freighters float in zero-G, moored to the cavern walls. Airlocks in those



walls lead to interior rooms and passageways which are pressurized, heated, and equipped with grav plates for human comfort. Several hundred pirates can be found inside Trevannic Alpha at any given time. Some are combat-trained and -equipped. Most are technicians and workers used to strip captured ships. Just before or after a raid, as many as a thousand pirates, most of them raiders, may occupy the moon as they prepare for the operation or distribute the loot from a captured ship.

Several chambers within the moon are used by the pirates to store booty. They are guarded by armed troops and contain hundreds of millions of credits' worth of medicines, precious metals, weapons, luxury goods such as furs or jewelry, and the currency of a dozen different worlds and governments.

Most of the pirates live in one of several large "barracks" areas. These are, in fact, large, empty rooms which have been partitioned by the pirates into cubicles as living quarters. Cooking, washing, and similar chores are carried out in jury-rigged areas nearby.

All of Trevannic Alpha's water comes from the surface of Trevannic. There are no asteroids in the system, and water ice found at the system's four gas giants is heavily contaminated with methane and ammonia and must be purified for use. For the pirates who established the base on Alpha several years ago, it was quicker and easier to plan to bring all of their water from Trevannic. Water lighters venture to the surface about every ten days (when the moon is closest to the planet) and take on cargos of fresh water from the base at Dragonsbreath. Water is kept inside several large storage bladders in underground caverns.

The Lost Spaceship

Trevannic Alpha was once a starship, built for sublight travel by the ancestors of the Droashav. A slow, cumbersome vessel, it took over 5000 years to travel less than 288 parsecs from Kirur to Trevannic, at an average velocity of less than twenty percent of light speed.

The pirates currently inhabit less than five percent of the ancient starship's spaces. The barracks areas were once cargo holds for food. The underground docking area was the starship's main cargo hatch.

Thousands of kilometers of corridors and passageways exist within the asteroid, and only a tiny portion of them have been explored by the pirates who discovered them about 15 years ago. Pirates, after all, have other things to do than explore ancient ruins. Once it became clear that nothing of value had been left in the moon, they lost further interest.

Many of the corridors are sealed by blast doors several meters thick. Others have been blocked by damage. The pirates were able to gain access to the asteroid's core where the engines are located, and they found the engines and power plant to be fused and useless. Several chambers that might have been control rooms have been explored. The instrumentation either no longer functions or has been torn out.

Referee's Notes: The player characters may find themselves in a position to explore portions of Trevannic Alpha's corridors, either deliberately or as part of an attempt to escape from

pirate captivity. Because of the sheer size and volume of the old Droashav tunnel network, it has not been mapped here.

Referees with player groups who enjoy dungeon-style maze explorations, however, should feel free to create their own map in as much detail and complexity as desired. While laying out the maze, the referee should note the following points:

• The maze is three-dimensional. Level is stacked upon level. There are vertical passageways which cut through these levels like elevator shafts, but nothing like elevators exist. Movement from level to level appears to have been facilitated by zero-G. In most cases, one layer of maze will simply run under another. Since most of the network is in zero-G, it is impossible to tell without special surveying instruments whether a corridor is sloping up or down.

• There is evidence that grav plates once provided gravity throughout the network of rooms and passageways, but there is now no power for them. All of the network except those areas occupied by the pirates is in zero-G.

• Though the network once was pressurized, the atmosphere has long since leaked out into space. The areas occupied by humans have been sealed and pressurized by the pirates. Airlocks permit passage from the occupied areas to the maze. All tunnels and rooms beyond the occupied areas are in vacuum.

• Nearly all of the passageways and chambers show signs of having been stripped long ago. Panels have been torn from walls, revealing wires and useless circuitry. Instrument consoles have been smashed. Partly melted and charred craters in ceilings, walls and floors show that there was extensive fighting inside the asteroid.

• While mapping out the asteroid maze, the Referee should provide the following "prizes":

— Explorers will occasionally find the vacc-suited bodies of humans drifting in otherwise dark and empty passageways. Without exception, they have no air remaining in their tanks and appear to have died of suffocation. These are the bodies of pirates who explored the chambers years ago, got lost, and ran out of air while trying to find their way back to pressurized areas.

— Explorers will find numerous Droashav skeletons. These six-limbed creatures appear to have died violently long ago, as burned and charred bones will suggest. The fact that skeletons remain rather than vacuum-preserved bodies indicates that they died while the asteroid starship still possessed an internal atmosphere. The bodies were left behind and decayed long before the last traces of atmosphere bled out into surrounding space. At least one large chamber is filled with thousands of drifting Droashav bones and skeletons, evidence of of mass slaughter.

— There is extensive evidence of fighting aboard the starship. Control room consoles have been shot to bits, and there are craters and melted spots in the passageway walls. Fires appear to have consumed many areas. Several chambers which may once have been airlocks leading to the surface appear to have been damaged and repaired by hurried and makeshift means. Finally, any useful equipment appears to have been salvaged, in many cases bodily ripped from bulkheads and decks.

— The majority of the rooms will appear to have been living quarters, with strange-looking beds, chairs, tables, and shelves actually molded from the rock. The occupants appear to have been communal creatures living in large families. Beyond the skeletal remains drifting in some of these rooms, there will be little remaining to suggest how they lived. Lighting fixtures, controls, utensils, and personal belongings appear to have been taken away.

— Somewhere fairly close to the pirate areas is the long, eerily-lit cavern known as the Hall of the Ages. This is described in detail below.

— Several shafts will lead the explorers to the surface of the asteroid. These provide escape routes for characters fleeing the pirates and will enable them to escape the maze and emerge on the asteroid's surface. From there, they may be able to find and capture one of the small shuttles the pirates use for forays to Trevannic's surface.

Hall of the Ages

The Hall of the Ages is located somewhere fairly close to the pirate area of the tunnel network. It is a long, high-ceilinged tunnel. Though there is no air or environmental control, some hidden power source remains, for the grav plates still work and the tunnel becomes active whenever a character enters it.

The tunnel has hidden mechanisms that project 3-D images in the air around any character walking along its 100-meter length. Apparently, the tunnel was designed as some sort of record storage-and-retrieval system — hence its name — and probably served as a library, a memorial, as entertainment, or a combination of the three for the asteroid starship's builders. The scenes projected are always different and are apparently chosen randomly. They appear as real-time holo recordings which merge from one to another as the viewer walks along the hall.

Common images include:

— Several Droashav (usually four or six), wearing nothing but leather pouches strapped to their bodies, running down a K'kree on a wide, open veldt-type plain. The K'kree has no personal adornment and has none of the styling of mane or body hair used today to indicate caste. The Droashav can be seen running the exhausted K'kree down, leaping on it with flaying claws extended, and tearing large strips of bloody flesh from its body.

— A large number of Droashav participating in some sort of ceremony. Hundreds of them fill a circular arena. One by one, K'kree are led to a low, central stone platform. Some of the captives are in chains. Others, horribly, have had their arms amputated. They are chained to the platform and eaten alive.

— Droashav are also seen in "civilized" settings. They appear to be going about their daily business in an alien-looking but advanced city. Personal transportation appears to be by way of hovering platforms with upright control columns,

grav sleds of some kind. Larger vehicles visible in the distance are obviously grav powered. Individual Droashav can be seen carrying technological devices of unknown purpose, using small visual communicators strapped to their upper arms, and wearing complex harnesses of plastic and metal. At a guess, the culture has a Tech level of at least 9.

— a large, winged spacecraft — similar in size to a ship's boat — is seen landing on an open prairie. Sometimes a village can be seen burning in the distance. A number of Droashav armed with strange-looking weapons — including beam weapons of some type — and wearing lightweight armor, emerge and begin forming in military array.

The impression drawn from the scenes is that the Droashav pictured in them were technologically advanced far beyond the Droashav of today. They appear to have indulged in extremely bloody activities with a minimum of technological support, possibly for sport (picture a modern man hunting game with a bow) or for ceremonial religious reasons. The ancient Droashav were hunters, with cultural traditions deeply imbedded in the love of the hunt, the chase, and the kill.

The identification of the Droashav pictured in the Hall of the Ages as the G'naak of K'kree legend should be immediately obvious.

EXPLORING TREVANNIC

The nature of the player characters' introduction to Trevannic will depend on how they reach the world. Possibilities include arriving in their own ship, either to scout the world or as part of a xenoarchaeological expedition from Gateway; or arriving as part of a pirate force, either as prisoners or as part of an undercover role where they are masquerading as pirates.

Each of these possibilities is discussed below:

• If they arrive as scouts (on behalf of the GSI or the GXF) they can land anywhere on the world they want. There is a beacon identifying Dragonsbreath as a class-E starport, but they can choose any place to land, either openly or in secret. If they set down openly, pirate forces will arrive to capture them in 1D6 hours. The force will consist of 2D6 + 10 pirates, armed with laser rifles, travelling in two armed military G-carriers.

• If they arrive as part of an Foundation expedition, they will land openly at any site of their choosing. Two military G-carriers will arrive as described above to capture them.

• If the characters arrive as prisoners (or if they are captured, as described above) they will be taken at once to Trevannic Alpha and locked in a holding cell with 2D6 other prisoners, all captured during a recent hijacking of a passenger liner.

• If the characters come to the Trevannic system as part of Operation Nova (or otherwise disguised as pirates) they will go first to Trevannic Alpha. It will be some time (Referee's discretion) before they are given anything like a free run of the asteroid base. At some point, they may request and get permission to venture to Trevannic's surface, where they will serve as guards or workers at the pirates' water and power plants. Once on Trevannic's surface, they will be unable to see anything except the Dragonsbreath facilities, unless they steal an air/raft or otherwise engineer an escape.

Planetary Description

The planet Trevannic, even within the north polar region where Dragonsbreath is located, is extremely hot and arid. There are oceans, lakes, and rivers, but large areas of the terrain are inhospitable desert. At the poles, temperatures are tolerable for humans. Dragonsbreath is located within a few degrees of the north pole.

The air is hot, dry, and dusty. Though it can be breathed for short periods (up to several hours) without ill effect, prolonged exposure without use of a filter mask can result in lung damage to humans similar to silicosis. Local filter masks also humidify the air to make it more comfortable to breathe. Occasional sandstorms make breathing all but impossible without filter masks or other protection. The natives are not bothered by the dust but wear protective robes and scarves during storms.

Travel on Trevannic is difficult for humans. Water is always a basic necessity. One man needs two to four liters of water per day to survive desert temperatures of 30° to 35° C., more if it is hotter. Vehicles are few and subject to frequent breakdown. Humans never travel into the deep desert.

The Droashav

Most of Trevannic's Droashav are desert nomads, moving about the planet in "tribes" of 2D6 x 10 individuals. Hunting packs of 2D6 individuals roam prairie areas in search of game. The preferred hunting method is to run game to earth (much the same as wolf packs on Earth), slashing it with their large hind foot claws until the prey bleeds to death. The hunters eat their fill, then carry the remains back to their home camp. Tech Level rarely exceeds 1.

One tribe, the Kavah ("Kinsmen"), have a Tech level of 4, live in cities of mud brick, and enjoy a more or less settled society. They wear elaborate robes, raise domesticated animals — the goral and the nuu — for transport and for food. They benefit from trade with the less advanced tribes around them and with the pirates at Dragonsbreath. They are frequently at war with one or more of the desert tribes, and use breech-loading rifles provided by the pirates to hold the nomads at bay. Many of the Kavah go off-world. Most serve with the pirates, either as laborers or as fighters. A few have managed to emigrate to other worlds where they hire themselves out as barbarian mercenaries.

The Droashav are not affected by the heat in the polar regions, but even they do not venture into the planet's equatorial zones, where daytime temperatures can top 70° Centigrade. Temperatures at the poles hover around 30°C., which the Droashav find slightly chilly.

The Droashav have numerous stories and legends of the old days, when their tribes "wandered among the stars." Various myths dimly remember a time when a great hero used the moon Vrad for a boat to set sail among the stars, leading his people from a paradise which the gods transformed into a hell.

Some modern Droashav have seen the images in the Hall of Ages. None have been able to comment on them

beyond the obvious: they show scenes of hunting and hunting-oriented ceremony. They remember nothing of the purpose or meaning of the various chambers, rooms, and skeletal debris within Trevannic Alpha.

Trevannic's Weak Points

The players may at some point in the adventure find themselves in a position where they must attack the pirate presence in the Trevannic system. The key to such an attack is the port of Dragonsbreath. It is Trevannic Alpha's sole source of water for drinking, washing, fusion power, and emergency fuel reserves. By destroying the pumping and storage facilities on Trevannic, the characters could cripple pirate operations in the system, forcing them to abandon Trevannic entirely.

Dragonsbreath is guarded, of course, but not heavily, since the pirates rely on secrecy rather than strength of arms to preserve their operation in Trevannic. Most of the guards are natives, armed with TL-5 lever-action rifles. At any given time, there are 2D6 + 10 Droashav guards around the perimeter of the pump station and power plant. In addition, there will be 2D6 human pirate guards armed with laser rifles, and 2D6 pirate technicians servicing the machinery. Most of the technicians are armed with auto or laser pistols.

If the characters are strong enough, they may attempt to attack the facility themselves. As an alternative, they may wish to seek out one of the hostile native desert tribes as allies.

It will take considerable courage and skill to convince a desert nomad tribe not to slaughter the characters out of hand the first time they are encountered. A few speak the "water stealers' speech," however, and will listen to whatever the characters have to say before killing them. Most desert tribes are angry at the thought of strangers from the sky stealing the planet's water. Most attacks on the Kavah are prompted by that tribe's dealings with the offworlders, who trade guns and trinkets for the right to take the precious resource. Characters who are able to win the desert nomads' attention will not find it hard to convince them that an all-out attack on Dragonsbreath, while costly, could end offworlder interference in Trevannic's affairs.

Alternatively, some desert tribes may be motivated more by greed. They would like to replace the Kavah as the recipients of the offworlders' trinkets and guns and would be willing to attack Kavah and offworlders alike in exchange for promises that the characters will change the current order of things.

Trevannic Alpha Viewed From Trevannic

The player characters may find themselves studying Trevannic's moon from the planet's surface. This may come about because the characters are scouting the system and have arrived on Trevannic as part of a scientific expedition or covertly, as scouts. They may also be on Trevannic as prisoners or as part of a pirate raiding party.

Trevannic Alpha circles the planet in an eccentric orbit inclined sharply to the ecliptic. (This is a scientific clue to the fact that the moon arrived in the system from someplace else.) At its closest, the moon presents only a tiny disk, barely perceptible to the naked eye. At its farthest, it is merely a bright star.

Furthermore, Trevannic Alpha is visible from northern latitudes (such as the north-polar location of Dragonsbreath) for only two days out of its nine-and-a-half day "month," when it moves low across the southern sky during its close passage to the planet. In Trevannic's southern hemisphere, the moon is visible for seven days in the northern sky, while it is at its farthest distance.

A small telescope or powerful electronic binoculars will easily reveal Trevannic Alpha's pitted and cratered surface. Spacecraft can be seen entering and departing one of the craters. These spacecraft include pirate vessels returning from raids in other systems, water lighters (dispatched only during the two-day close passage), shuttles, and an occasional captured liner or freighter brought to the moon for looting.

The Pirates on Trevannic

The Droashav of Trevannic have a long and bloody history as carnivorous hunters. Until recently, theirs was a tribal culture not far removed from the pack-hunter carnivores they are descended from. The Droashav were first encountered by human explorers nearly eight hundred years ago. For centuries, Trevannic was listed as an interdicted world by the Galian League Explorer Service — the equivalent of a Red Zone in Imperial space — primarily because human visitors were being eaten as soon as they stepped off their ships.

Recent contact with the Kavah of Trevannic was probably first established by the Fellowship of Kotar under the infamous Carlton Jack, at about the time of the infamous raid on nearby Tavarand. Members of the scattered Fellowship were later incorporated into the new Castran Marauders, and they brought with them information about the world called Trevannic.

The pirates were determined to establish a base on Trevannic's surface, despite native hostility. They had discovered Trevannic Alpha's caverns and must have decided early on that the asteroid had once been used as a spacecraft. Its drives were dead, the secret of their function lost, but the vast caves and rock-hewn chambers were perfect as a ready-made hideout for the Castran Marauders' fleets and prizes. In fact, Trevannic Alpha possessed everything that the pirates needed to make it a perfect base except for one thing: water.

Rather than built costly purification plants near the system's gas giants — a project for a planetary government, not pirates — and rather than shipping tankers-full of water in from some other system, it was decided to get water from nearby Trevannic.

The natives were a problem at first, but a demonstration of the pirates' superior firepower quickly taught the Droashav to respect the offworlders' weapons. Once they found out that the outsiders were too tough to eat, the Droashav quickly learned the benefits of trade. The offworlders exchanged tools and simple machinery, weapons (none more advanced than Tech Level 5 slug-throwers), and food (taken from pillaged liners) for Droashav labor and the right to pump and store water from the Gharrax'n River. Periodically, fueling tankers land at Dragonsbreath and take on full loads of water, which is then transported to Trevannic Alpha.

In addition, the Droashav natives found an easy way off-world for a lucky few of them. Many of them were taken to

Alpha where they augment the pirates' work force, offloading cargo and performing simple maintenance under human supervision. A very few of the best Droashav warriors were recruited into the pirate ranks; some, like those first encountered with Marik Jollynn, became bodyguards for pirate bigshots.

ESCAPE FROM TREVANNIC

At some point, the characters must attempt to escape from Trevannic. This will be true whether they are pretending to be pirates as part of Operation Nova, or whether they have been captured and are being held as prisoners. If they have managed to arrive on Trevannic in secret as part of a scouting expedition to the system, they may be able to leave as they came, taking care to shield themselves from pirate sensors on the moon and at Dragonsbreath.

Escape may be by any of several possible means. The exact method will depend on the situation and on the players' ingenuity. Some possibilities are listed below:

• The characters manage to capture a starship and fly it to a friendly port. At any given time, at least one pirate starship will be moored within the large docking cavern in Trevannic Alpha. This will be anything from a Free Trader to a Mercenary Cruiser. If the characters arrived in their own ship (either captured or while pretending to be pirates), it will probably still be present. Another possibility is that a hijacked liner or freighter will be present in the cavern while it is being looted. The characters might contrive a jailbreak scenario, where prisoners being held in the moon are freed, escaping on the ship in which they were captured.

Starships and spacecraft will always be guarded, but never heavily. The pirates are not, after all, expecting a hijacking within the confines of their own secret base.

Starships will only rarely be present on the surface of Trevannic. (They occasionally land for refueling directly from the planet's lakes or rivers but are heavily guarded at those times against the possibility of nomad attack.) However, there are always numerous shuttles, ship's boats, and other non-Jump capable spacecraft at the Dragonsbreath port. One of these could be captured and used as a Trojan Horse to approach a starship in or near Trevannic Alpha.

• Characters who are masquerading as pirates might leave the system as part of a raiding party and manage to either hijack the ship en route (difficult, since it will be loaded with pirates) or betray the group to the good guys (a hunterfleet or a convoy escort). This last course is risky since the good guys will probably shoot first and verify identities later. A variation on this theme would be to take part in a raid but contrive to pass on a message (left with victims marooned somewhere by the pirates, for example) to be passed on to the proper authorities.

• The characters might manage to signal a passing hunterfleet. Standard procedure is for the pirate vessels and facilities within the system to shut down when a hunterfleet is passing through. Time delay should make it impossible for the pirates to know that a hunterfleet has entered the fringes of the system and is recording their hours-old radio traffic. However, the pirates display an uncanny knack for guessing when a hunterfleet will be in the area — the result of having well-placed informants such as Marik Jollynn.

If they are participating in Operation Nova, the player characters might know in advance when a hunterfleet is supposed to arrive in-system as part of their mission briefing. Alternatively, they could be aware of the hunterfleet's presence when the pirate commanders order radio silence and a cessation of ship activities in the system. In either case, if the characters could make a radio transmission, fire a laser weapon or missile, or time their escape in a ship's boat while a hunterfleet is in the Trevannic system, their actions will be detected by long range ship's sensors.

If course, they will have to survive the attentions of a number of angry pirates until the cavalry arrives.

Referee's Notes: However the player characters manage it, the end result should be an exciting chase, a running battle, and a rescue by superior friendly forces at the end. As a result of their escape, the characters should be able to provide the Galian and/or the Plavian military with the location of the secret pirate base. If the rescuers are an anti-pirate hunterfleet, an immediate strike will be organized. If the players have made their escape to a friendly port, a hunterfleet strike will be organized as soon as they contact GSI or military authorities.

In either case, the Referee should contrive to have the player characters go along with the hunterforce when it launches its strike on Trevannic Alpha.

IDENTITY OF THE DROASHAV (REFEREE ONLY)

The characters should be able to assemble several of the clues presented in this campaign to learn who and what the Droashav of Trevannic are, and how they relate to the K'kree.

Droashav Origins

The original homeworld of the Droashav is lost in the murk of Galactic prehistory and may never be known but was probably located somewhere to coreward and antispinward of the modern Imperium. Judging by the modern population on Trevannic, they originated on the world of a brighter, hotter star than Sol, one with slightly warmer temperatures, lower gravity, and a higher percentage of atmospheric CO_2.

At some point in the distant past, they learned to cross interstellar space using hollowed-out asteroids as spacecraft-worlds. Presumably there were a number of these mobile worlds, though only one has so far been encountered in human space. Strictly sublight vessels, they took centuries to cross the gulfs between stars at velocities of about 20% of the speed of light, with generation after generation born, living, and dying within the enclosed and tightly ordered confines of the world/ship. The very name "Droashav" means wanderers in their native tongue. Their original term for themselves is unknown. It is possible that the Droashav have been wandering for hundreds of thousands of years, and that their point of origin lies far across the Galaxy, or even in another galaxy entirely.

The Droashav at Klrur

Approximately twenty-eight thousand years ago, a

Droashav planetoid ship arrived at Kirur and the inhabitants attempted to colonize the system. With a highly advanced technology, they terraformed — perhaps "Droashav-formed" would be more precise — Kirrixur, the large satellite of the system's third world. Specifically, they appear to have increased the CO_2 content of the moon's native atmosphere, creating an artificial greenhouse effect to raise the ambient temperature to more closely match their physiological needs.

At the same time, they planted colonies on Kirur itself, but apparently they did not attempt to alter the climate there. The Droashav would have been uncomfortable on larger, cooler Kirur and would have been aware that major changes to the climate would have resulted in mass extinctions of the native life. Almost certainly, the Droashav envisioned using Kirur as a carnivore's granary, a kind of gigantic hunting preserve. By chance, the biochemistry of Kirur's native life was compatible with that of the Droashav, and Droashav hunters ranged across Kirur in pursuit of native life forms . . . especially the large, six-limbed herbivores which already showed a high degree of intelligence and culture, built cities, and used tools.

It must be assumed that the Droashav who colonized Kirur had a moral sense radically alien from that of any of the cultures of Humaniti, the Aslan, the Vargr, or the Hivers. Their view of non-Droashav lifeforms was in fact similar in some respects to the world view of the K'kree: other species, even intelligent ones, exist to serve the master race. In this case, the herds of primitive K'kree would have been viewed as easily trained and bred food animals.

Unfortunately for the Droashav, they arrived at an inopportune time in Kirur's history, the beginning of the Nagr'ika'rrgaa, or time of shed blood.

For at least seventy thousand years, the Nagr'axk ee nak — the shadowed time of nightmare — K'kree had been struggling for survival against the vicious and tenacious carnivores which preyed on them. Some two thousand years before the Droashav arrived, the K'kree had begun the systematic extermination of all of Kirur's carnivores. From the K'kree point of view, the Droashav were simply one more species of carnivore which had to be exterminated.

The Droashav planetary colonies were overrun and wiped out, though a bitter struggle lasting centuries must have preceded the final victory. The Droashav must have realized at this time that their numbers were too few to win and keep a foothold on an impossibly hostile world.

Evidently, a revolt or war — or at least a sharp difference of opinion — took place within Droashav ranks. Many Droashav wanted to take up the nomadic life of their forefathers, to cross space in search of a new world which they could remake into a home. Others felt that they already had such a home — Kirrixur — and that further wandering was pointless. Perhaps the Kirrixurian Droashav hoped that the K'kree could yet be broken to their will. Approximately twenty-seven thousand years ago, some of the Droashav set forth again in the asteroid starship. The "second moon" of K'kree legend vanished from the night sky, an event recorded on the Tablet of the Dawn.

Other Droashav remained on Kirrixur, the lights of their cities visible to the K'kree across the gulf of a hundred thousand kilometers.

Probably, the Droashav remaining on Kirrixur fell to

fighting among themselves. Certainly, their technology twenty-two thousand years later, when the K'kree finally reached Kirrixur, was no more advanced than that of the K'kree, and possibly they had sunk to a more primitive level. It took only 21 years to exterminate the Droashav civilization on Kirrixur, which suggests that the K'kree had a great advantage in technology.

The Droashav of the asteroid starship, meanwhile, had set off across interstellar space once more. They travelled almost three hundred parsecs, rimward and slightly spinward from Kirur, in a voyage which lasted over five thousand years. Toward the end of their journey, fighting broke out within the starship's population. The causes are a mystery and may forever remain unknown, though further exploration of Trevannic Alpha may yield records or further clues.

Approximately twenty-one thousand years ago they arrived at the world called Trevannic by humans. It could be that the fighting on board forced the end of the voyage by damaging the ship's engines and life support systems. The destruction of the engines obviously occurred after the asteroid was already in orbit, though it is possible they had been damaged in earlier fighting. (It is tempting to imagine that the cause of the fighting was a schism between two Droashav groups, one which wanted to continue the voyage, and another which wanted to establish a planetary home in the traditions of their distant, planet-bound ancestors. Confirmation of this theory may someday be discovered among Trevannic Alpha's unexplored caverns and passageways.)

In any case, the asteroid ship was abandoned in a great

hurry. Everything of value which could be stripped and moved was taken. Bodies were left behind in the rush, but electronic equipment, power plants, weapons, everything of value was loaded onto shuttles and transported to the planet's surface.

Possessed of a warm climate, a compatible biochemistry, and numerous native herbivores, the world called Mnohvaassh'xtr (roughly "New Place of Open Sky") in the Droashav tongue became the final home for the wanderers. Unfortunately, the fighting begun on the starship continued on the planet. Numerous planet-wide ruins suggest that the Droashav built a fairly advanced civilization which then destroyed itself in a series of violent wars.

Today's Droashav are far more primitive than their ancestors. The most advanced have achieved a Tech Level of approximately 4, while most of the natives are still at TL 1. The Droashav have not been capable of spaceflight since they arrived in-system, though increasing numbers of them serve as mercenaries on human ships and worlds.

The ancient Droashav asteroid-spacecraft remains in an elliptical orbit around Trevannic, derelict and forgotten even by the natives of the planet who remember it as Vrad Orixsshiv'ntr, "Home of Crossings," usually shortened to "Vrad." Certain Droashav myths tell how the Wanderers came to Mnohvaassh'xtr from the sky; others tell how an ancient Droashav hero wrested the moon from the heavens and used it as a boat for hunting, before setting it in Mnohvaassh'xtr's sky as a sign of his prowess.

Modern Droashav do not remember the K'kree or Kirur.

The K'kree, however, do not forget. . . .

SAVING THE PLANET

Once the players identify Trevannic as the site of a secret pirate base, they can be involved in the hunterfleet operation that attacks the base and routs the pirates. Depending on the course of subsequent events, they may be aware — then or later — that the K'kree of the Xaar'keer! are interested in Trevannic. Once the K'kree merchant Grek escapes from Gateway with the Tablet of the Dawn and survey data on Trevannic, the players should be able to guess that the K'kree are going to do something about the new homeworld of their ancient enemies.

The resolution of this campaign can take one of several forms:

• They can ignore the K'kree threat and let nature take its course. The Droashav are not particularly pleasant people, and the K'kree raid will ensure that they never trouble anyone in the sector again.

This, obviously, is a less than totally satisfactory resolution. The Referee may wish to emphasize that if the K'kree turn Trevannic into a radioactive cinder, the various human governments now preparing for war against the Hochiken People's Assembly may be forced to split their forces. A K'kree success at Trevannic will certainly inspire the Xaar'keer! to try further conquests in human space.

The player characters can save the planet Trevannic by leading a powerful naval force to the system and patrolling until the K'kree arrive. Depending on the timing of events within the unfolding story, this could be the hunterfleet which rescues them from the pirates on Trevannic, or it could be a new force organized back in the Galian Federation for the express purpose of stopping the K'kree.

The naval force brought to Trevannic's rescue will consist of a number (Referee's discretion) of escort ships (such as Close Escorts) plus an aging Battle Rider, Emperor of the March. The force will be large enough to make the K'kree think twice about attacking the human ships or the planet.

In addition, captured pirate ships and the defenses of Trevannic Alpha could be brought into play.

The human fleet will be under the command of Admiral Blain, of the Galian Federation Navy. At the Referee's discretion (based on whether or not the characters have been involved at all during this adventure with Force Bravo and the guerrilla war against the K'kree in the Renkard Union) Admiral Vandamien, the old warhorse who lost the battle of Xabthar, will be present, eager to redeem himself in a final contest against the K'kree invaders.

As an alternative to the above, the players may be able to organize pirate forces in the defense of Trevannic, especially if they were able to infiltrate the pirate command and take control of the Castran Marauders. A number of Mercenary Cruisers, Close Escorts, and armed Far Traders could constitute a fleet large enough to challenge the K'kree battle fleet.

The K'kree battleforce will consist of at least 10 Kr'ach'trexixuur!trr (light cruisers) and 15 Kr'ach'achtrex (armed scouts). Also present will be a single K'kree battleship, the powerful Kirunika'rra, flagship of the Empire of Xuruk. On board is no less a personage than Kaxk'kaguraa'khan, supreme Overlord of Lords of the Xuruk Empire. With him is Xkluur'gh'grek, the K'kree "merchant" from Gateway, now revealed as an agent of the Xuruk Empire.

Referee's Note: Kaxk's presence should alert the characters to the vital importance of Trevannic in K'kree eyes. The homeworld of the K'kree's old nemesis has been discovered, and Kaxk'kaguraa'khan hopes to dispatch the Droashav personally, bombarding their world from space until it is a glassy, radioactive cinder.

Referee's Note, the Real Story: Although the player characters will have no way of learning the fact, they might be able to guess — perhaps with input from a Galian officer who is an expert on K'kree politics — that Kaxk is looking for a victory that will give him incredible political leverage within the Two Thousand Worlds. The so-called "Empire of Xuruk" is, in fact, a splinter empire, with no direct links of government to Kirur beyond the symbolic homage due the current Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds. It is conceivable, however, that the ambitious Kaxk'kaguraa'khan could be elevated to the status of ruler of all K'kree everywhere, becoming in fact the Ghik'keer!k'ak T't'tkahk Xeng Kirr: Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds.

The Confrontation

If the player characters have arranged for a human fleet to meet the K'kree armada, a stand-off will result. For all his desire to unify the K'kree under his rule, Kaxk is somewhat hesitant to expose himself to battle. Bombarding a Tech Level 1 world into radioactive glass is one thing; facing a well-armed

battle force, alerted and ready to fight, is something else.

Kaxk will bluster and threaten, demanding the eradication of the G'naak meat-eaters. If the human forces back down in the face of his bluff, he will bombard Trevannic and depart.

If, however, the human forces, bolstered perhaps by the player characters on the bridge, refuse to bow to K'kree threats, Kaxk will depart, vowing to return.

There is a third alternative, of course. Admiral Blain's preference (and that of Admiral Vandamien, if he is present) will be to confront the K'kree verbally when they first appear. At the Referee's discretion, however, and if the player characters urge Blain to do so, he will arrange an ambush by his forces and attack the K'kree fleet when it first arrives in-system.

Such an ambush will require either a rather large-scale ship-by-ship combat resolution, or adaptation of Traveller rules for such combat such as those found in Trillion Credit Squadron, by GDW. Alternatively, the Referee can allow the player characters to resolve a portion of the human attack on the K'kree fleet and have Kaxk withdraw as soon as his own flagship is threatened.

Victory: The Players' Reward

While Trevannic's fate will not be immediately crucial to the future of the sector, the good feeling that comes from saving an entire world and its millions of inhabitants will be the player characters' climactic reward in this campaign. The fact that the Droashav are not particularly nice inhabitants should not be a factor in the characters' determination to prevent genocide. The Droashav might yet achieve a high-level of civilization; certainly, much could be learned about K'kree history through a careful study of Droashav culture, myth, and legend.

Furthermore, the destruction of Trevannic could have more far-reaching results than the survival of a single barbarian species. Knowledge that the Xuruk Empire has struck so deeply into the heart of the Gateway Sector will be extremely disturbing to the various governments now arming for war against the Hochiken People's Assembly. It will pull needed resources — ships and men — away from the focus of the struggle with the HPA, forcing the Galians and the Plavians (who have already shifted most of their military forces to the HPA border) to prepare for what amounts to a two-front war, one against the HPA and the other against the K'kree. In the coming war, that division of resources could well prove to be fatal. Worse, success will encourage the Xuruk Empire to continue their invasion of human space, beginning with Megusard.

By crushing the K'kree attempt to destroy Trevannic, Galian forces will make the leaders of the Xuruk Empire think twice before penetrating human space again. The invasion may still come one day — the K'kree will not be willing to rest knowing their old, hereditary enemies yet survive — but the final day of reckoning might be postponed until after the coming war with the HPA. Human attention may still be diverted by the threat of a K'kree return to Trevannic, but Kaxk's retreat (or, better still, his defeat in a battle) will have bought the human governments of the sector some time. Furthermore, a future K'kree invasion will be more likely to come through a more traditional series of invasions, rather than a single lightning strike deep into the Castran Subsector.

In other words, the K'kree fleets of the Lords of Thunder will concentrate first on conquering the Megusard Union before risking a battle fleet deep inside human space. Defeat of Kaxk at Trevannic will probably lead to new and firmer treaties between Megusard and both the Plavian League and the Galian Federation. The League and the Federation will be able to concentrate on the Hochiken People's Assembly and the Viyard Concourse.

CONCLUDING THE CAMPAIGN

Once the K'kree fleet has been driven off, the player characters may find themselves heroes. It was, after all, they who retrieved the Tablet of the Dawn, discovered the secret of the Droashav and the asteroid moon, and warned the appropriate parties of the K'kree threat. Quite possibly (depending on how the adventure unfolded) they are responsible too for the defeat of pirate forces at Trevannic, and perhaps at other secret bases as well.

Heroes of such skill and resourcefulness will find themselves very much in demand. The Gateway Sector remains on the brink of war, with the Hochiken People's Assembly and the Viyard Concourse ready any day to attack the Galian Federation and the Plavian League. The characters might find themselves approached by Galian or Plavian officials and asked to take on special military assignments as the war begins. They might also find themselves attached to the GSI, which will be heavily involved in reconnaissance and surveillance of enemy forces deep within their own spheres of operations. The smaller governments within the sector — Akeen, Swanfei, Megusard, and the Trindel Confederacy — will all begin the war as neutrals. As war spreads, however, it will be impossible for them to remain neutral. Enemy agents will be at work in all four, attempting to bring them into the anti-Plavian/Galian axis.

And the K'kree of the Xuruk Empire will be back. Now that they have discovered Trevannic's secret, they will not rest until the homeworld of their ancient foe is destroyed. They may attempt another strike directly at Trevannic once Galian and Plavian fleet units are engaged in war against the HPA, or they could approach in a more conventional fashion, by invading the vacillating Megusard Corporate. In either case, the characters' experience against the Xuruk forces will make them invaluable when Kaxk and his legions return.

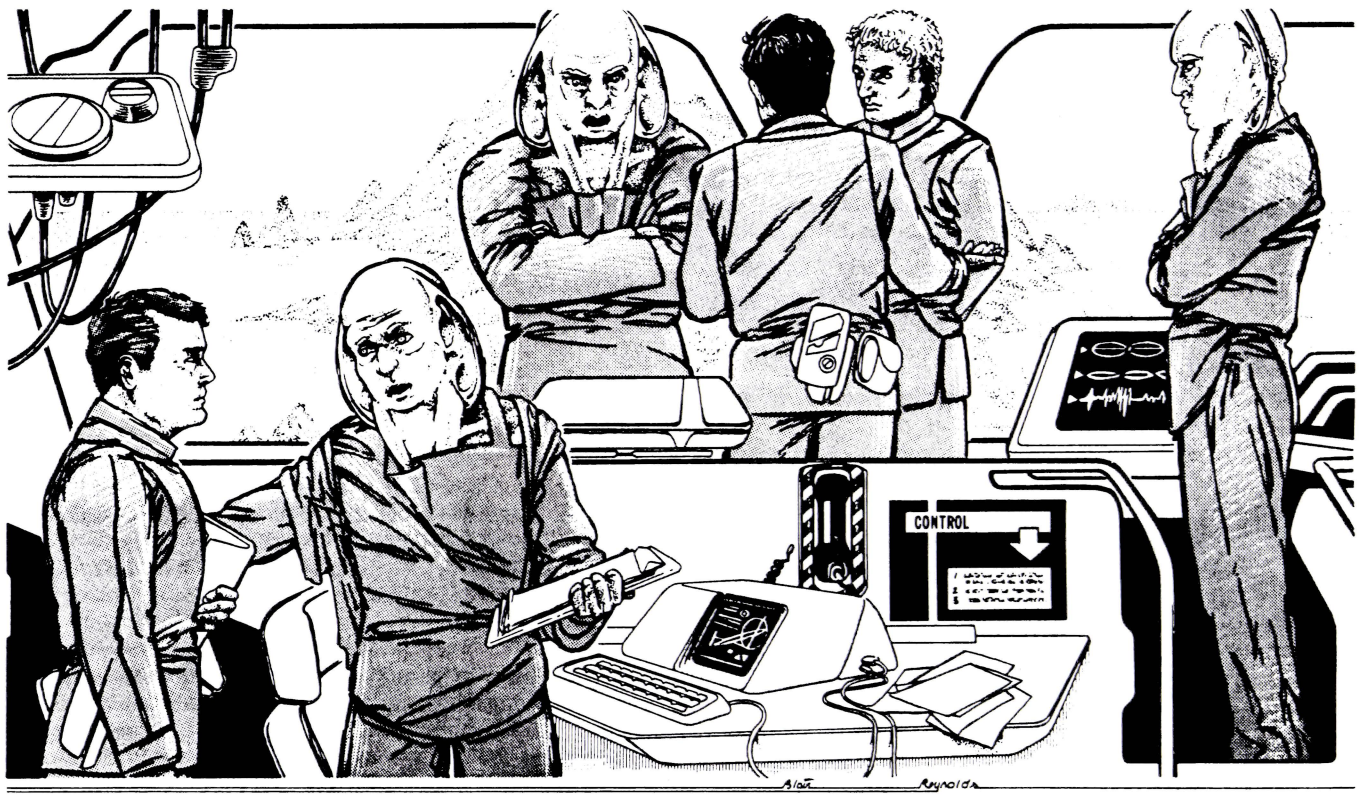
And especially chilling is the thought that the opportunistic HPA might attempt to form an alliance with the Lords of Thunder . . .

Whichever course the Referee decides to explore, the player characters will find plenty to keep them occupied as they continue to explore the worlds of the Gateway Sector.

And soon, they will find themselves facing the Lords of Thunder once again.

"IMPERIAL" LAW

A LOOK AT LAW IN TRAVELLER — *by Gary L. Thomas*



Blair Reynolds

Everywhere humaniti has gone, he has taken his laws with him. All the stars he has touched, whether from Vland, Terra, or Zhdant, have felt the influence of a code of behavior enforced by one man over another.

In the course of his travels, man discovered other races, with other laws and customs. Within their indigenous regions, a few aliens (particularly the Droyne and Vegans) have been able to continue in their own ways.

For the most part, however, these alien codes have always been relegated to a subordinate stature, and Imperial law as a whole shows little influence from non-human theories of government and jurisprudence.

The starship captain trying to wend his way peacefully and profitably from star to star is apt to find that the regulations he must obey are as diverse as is space itself. Just as one world may lack any atmosphere at all, while another is cloaked in dense clouds, so one world may leave shipping unhindered while another insists on defining and inspecting every detail of interstellar travel.

Fortunately, there is some respite from this mishmash of rules, thanks to the foresight of Cleon Zhunastu, the founder of the Third Imperium, and his influence on the interstellar trade customs of the Imperial region. To understand this contribution he made to civilization as we know it, we must delve back into the history of the great star empires that preceded him.

LAW UNDER THE VILANI EMPIRE

The Vilani Empire was a plutocracy, or government of the wealthy. Its regulations pertaining to starships and interstellar travel and trade were designed principally to produce the greatest profit for the three bureaux running the Vilani government.

As the Vilani were the first humans to discover the principles of the jump drive, it was they who were able in their travels to impose their economic wills on the other humans they encountered, bringing both benefits and disadvantages to them.

The principal benefit was the higher level of technology that the Vilani had achieved, and the potential for cross-cultural pollenization that this technology brought. The main disadvantage of Vilani rule was that this exchange was channeled through one of the three governing bureaux.

The bureaux historically had different spheres of influence: interstellar trade, interstellar government, and food production, but over time they became increasingly similar to each other. Each bureau was active in a certain geographical area, defined both by historical precedent and by explicit regulation, with overlap occurring in several places.

While one might think that the names of these bureaux would have been forgotten over the years (the government they composed fell 3,300 years ago), in fact they are household words everywhere in the Imperium: Makhidkarun, Naasirka, and Sharurshid. These three Imperial region-wide megacorporations

have their roots in the original Vilani government.

At the time of the First Imperium, then, there were few privately-owned starships, and starship travel was less common than it is today. Most vessels were funded and directed in their activities by the three bureaux. The rate of expansion was tempered between the desire to enlarge one's territory for pecuniary interest and the availability of ships and crew able to conduct this growth.

As is well known to every student today, the First Imperium originally expanded too fast and too far, resulting in a strained capacity to react to threats along its borders. Over-reacting to this problem caused the Vilani to then turn the empire inside out and forbid further expansion. When the Terrans encountered the First Imperium, the inner fragility of the Vilani governmental bonds resulted in the collapse of the First Imperium and the subsequent Rule of Man.

LAW UNDER THE RULE OF MAN

By contrast to the Vilani Empire's plutocracy, the Rule of Man was a "loot-ocracy", and the main intentions of its trade laws were to line the pockets of as many Terrans as possible. Taxation was heavy, restrictions on trade were arbitrarily declared to create artificial scarcity, and protectionist laws were rife.

Many historians believe that the unfavorable trade climate produced by the Terrans was one of the principal factors that led to the collapse of the Rule of Man. Even a first-term ensign could find himself suddenly the sole governor of an entire inhabited world. Most were not trained for such a tour of duty, and those that did possess ability in government often exploited it by usurping the wealth of their citizens.

LAW UNDER THE THIRD IMPERIUM

Cleon Zhunastu recognized from the start that economic self-interests were essential to a revitalized interstellar community. He also recognized that worlds would not join his nascent Imperium, formed from the Sylean Federation, unless he granted considerable autonomy to member systems.

Law and justice existed on three levels within the Imperium, not according to the severity of the offense (which may vary from world to world), but according to the legislative and enforcing bodies.

The *low justice* of planetary and local authorities governs everything from homicide to spitting on the sidewalk.

The *middle justice* of the subsectors is intended to protect relatively helpless societies on low technology worlds and to protect all societies from excessive damage by military actions. This is enforced by the police and military forces of the subsector duke, aided (if necessary) by Imperial military and Naval forces.

The *high justice* of the Imperium is intended to prevent revolt against Imperial authority, to keep the peace among member worlds, subsectors, and sectors; to uphold the rights of sentient beings; and to preserve commerce between worlds, subsectors, and sectors. High justice is enforced by the Imperial Navy, Army, and Marines, often assisted by the Security Branch of the Operations Office of the IISS (the Scouts). Imperial nobles, in particular, are obliged to keep their eyes open for infractions of high justice, and move to enforce these laws through the proper channels.

Other than the Restored Vilani Empire, this three-tiered method of law and justice is still practiced pretty much intact by the factions of the Shattered Imperium. The Restored Vilani Empire, of course, has gone back to a centralized administration of law and justice under the Vilani Megacorporations/Bureaux — a method not unlike that of the old First Imperium.

HIGH JUSTICE

In one sense, high justice laws set a minimum standard for all worlds in the Imperium. Thus, murdering a sentient being is prohibited by high justice, but rarely needs to be prosecuted as such, since almost all member worlds have their own laws and police to see that this is done. In those rare circumstances, for example, in which a murder takes place outside the jurisdiction of any particular world, high justice would be invoked to deal with the transgressor. In this way, high justice upholds the rights of sentient beings no matter where they travel within the boundaries of a given Imperial faction's rule.

The jurisdiction of middle and low justice similarly trickles down to smaller and smaller astrographic entities. Local worlds are free to make their own laws for their own particular inhabitants and circumstances, so long as these regulations do not conflict with the broad brushstrokes painted by subsector, sector, and faction-wide law.

In the extreme case, a city of a nation on a balkanized world could pass laws that apply only over a few square miles for a few hundred residents, while at the same time being under the jurisdiction of a series of expanding circles of law up to the faction's version of Imperial high justice.

Imperial law *per se* begins its jurisdiction at the exterior of a member star system, typically 1,000 A.U. from the system's star. Starports on a world or in orbit are considered to be extra-territorial, like embassies, so that there is no question that ships, passengers, and goods are protected in space from the starting point of a trip to its destination. Once goods are unloaded, however, or passengers leave the area of the starport proper, then local laws come into play.

One advantage to interstellar navigation provided when a world goes from non-aligned to joining the local Imperial faction is the installation of a space beacon network. Whenever a ship jumps into the system, information from these ever-transmitting beacons is immediately available, so the ship can quickly locate itself in the system.

The beacons also typically give interdiction data, so that if the faction's Navy or Scouts, for example, have outlawed contact with a world (or particular bodies in a system), the beacons provide the most up-to-date rules to visiting ships. Even low-tech systems have such beacons installed; these may be the most technological devices for a distance of several parsecs. Tampering with such a navigation beacon is a high-justice crime generally punishable by death.

THE IMPERIAL COMMERCIAL CONVENTION (ICC)

With the foregoing history out of the way, we can now discuss the genius of Cleon Zhunastu in promulgating a common standard of trade laws within the Imperial region, thus allowing and encouraging interstellar commerce and all of its attendant benefits to society. Most of these trade laws still apply, even under the Shattered Imperium (with the Restored Vilani Empire being the only major exception, of course).

The principle behind the ICC is a simple one: the convention is a stripped-down, albeit complete, compendium of rules covering all aspects of buying, transporting, and selling goods between worlds. Starships, corporations, and systems can become signatories to the convention by agreeing to its conditions and undergoing a regular inspection by the faction's certifying authority, the Commerce Convention Ministry (CCM).

The CCM is organized on a sector by sector basis, so that a starship operating in the Spinward Marches would contact the Spinward Marches branch (offices exist on most member worlds with class A and B starports). Cost for certification varies from

about Cr10,000 for a small merchant ship's annual inspection, up to millions of credits for the extensive ongoing inspection needed for a busy system starport facility.

Any system belonging to the convention is free, of course, to tack additional regulations of its own onto the CCM standard. Thus where the CCM establishes rules for quarantine of agricultural goods over the entire Imperium, a particular world with particular concerns of its own could further restrict the importation of certain items. But the starship captain knows in general what to expect, the trading company can predict its future revenues and expenses, the starport can coordinate traffic and insure safety, and the traveller and exporter know that their goods and persons will arrive in one piece, all thanks to a basic understanding of the "ground rules" by which everyone plays the game of interstellar commerce.

In the Shattered Imperium, however, the disgreement between factions makes crossing a faction's borders risky where it was not a problem in the days of the united Imperium. Naturally, this tends to impede trade across faction borders.

As another example, a starship subscribing to the CCM guarantees that its fusion power plants have certain built-in safety features. In this way, a world need not worry that nuclear-based power plants will melt down or spew dangerous materials through the world's environment. A more cautious captain or engineer could insist on other precautionary devices without conflicting with the convention, of course.

Further, standards for starports assure travellers that certain facilities, services, and amenities will be available upon arrival. Classification of starports as A, B, C, D, E, or X are made by the CCM. (Spaceports which desire to be signatories to the CCM can also be inspected and certified as class F, G, H, or Y.)

Commercial library data services can provide details of deviations from the CCM, but a crew member skilled in administrative matters is a benefit in any case.

LAWS IN THE SHATTERED IMPERIUM (AND BEYOND)

As straightforward as Cleon Zhunastu's Imperium-wide system of trade laws was, it is gone now, thanks to a bullet fired from Archduke Dulinor's pistol. Some parts of the Shattered Imperium still try to use the CCM, but the ability of certifying bodies to conduct their inspections is sketchy at best.

Here in Archduke Norris's loyal Domain of Deneb, sector branches of the CCM still maintain records of past inspections, but current inspections are delayed, and those in areas of hostile actions are not being scheduled at all.

Coreward, the Vargr race has never developed a unified system of laws in any way resembling the precepts of the ICC. Merchants among those worlds must keep track of a myriad of conflicting trade regulations; the worst aspect is the speed with which these laws change from moment to moment. Another danger in Vargr space is the prevalence of piracy. Since unscrupulous looters depend on the honest merchant, it seems impossible that there should be more pirates than merchants, but sometimes one is tempted to believe this is the case.

The Vland faction has returned to its Ziru Sirkaa model of trade laws, restricting local autonomy in favor of centralized mercantilistic legislation. This plutocratic change has been difficult to enforce, with official troops busily fighting increasing pirate activity throughout the region.

Surprisingly enough, in the area claimed by the "real" Strephon, and in the Usurper's domain of Ilelish, the CCM continues as though nothing happened, except in those areas of heavy fighting, where operations are occasionally interrupted for short periods of time.

In the area around Core Sector, Emperor Lucan has suspended the activities of the CCM, transferring its personnel to other duties more closely tied to the war effort against the rebels. Most traders and systems still claim to adhere to the CCM, but there are no longer any official certifications available.

In Antares, the trade laws of the Julian Protectorate have been melded to Archduke Brzk's dream of human-Vargr cooperation. The CCM in Antares Sector is dissolved as a remnant of the Third Imperium, and the ICC is no longer cited as a standard. New uniform trade laws, many based on the ICC, govern the activities on the worlds of the Protectorate; whether these increase or decrease trade is still an open question.

In Margaret's Stronghold, it's still "business as usual". The CCM still certifies, X-boats still carry messages, Tukera Lines still makes all its scheduled stops. But there are also ugly rumors of piracy and slavery in her regions, rumors that should be a caution to merchants and travellers.

The seceded Solomani Confederation has fallen back into its state of quasi-anarchy, tempered by the intrusions of SolSec agents. Worlds within the Solomani Confederation are, according to the latest reports, setting their own trade regulations.

The Hivers bordering the Solomani Confederation have a uniform set of laws that apply to interstellar travel; these policies are enacted by the Federation Development Agency. For the most part, they allow trade free and unencumbered by excessive taxation, while protecting primitive civilizations and encouraging the widest possible dispersement of trade goods.

The Federation of Daibei is another one that has incorporated its own version of the CCM wholesale into its government. DMIC, the Daibei Mission for Interstellar Commerce, continues certification according to ICC as though the Third Imperium still existed as it once was.

The Aslan Hierate approaches the Vargr worlds in the number of conflicting trade regulations it contains. The male's impetus toward owning land mirrors the female's desire to accumulate wealth. Trade is one activity they can share in, which helps to satisfy both their needs. Unfortunately, the diversity of rules hinders active trade, especially between worlds ruled by different clans.

EXAMPLES OF ICC REGULATIONS

The ICC contained minimum guidelines for every aspect of interstellar trade and travel. In practical terms, every world within the Imperial region (and a few beyond its borders) still follows the ICC, as the worlds which are not signatories are few and far between.

Starships tend to avoid such worlds because of the extra hassle of dealing with unusual regulations. Some examples of standards promulgated by the ICC are listed below.

Navigational Beacons: Standards for navigational beacons are particularly important, or pilots and navigators would not know where they could safely and legally travel within a system. In particular, such beacons are often used to regulate legal areas for water refueling and safe areas for gas giant skimming.

Certifications and Ratings: As already mentioned, starships, trading companies, and systems and starports became signatories to the ICC by agreeing to abide by its minimum guidelines.

Individuals could also be certified by the ICC as to their proficiency at various standard operations. For example, a "pilot-1 rating" from the ICC signified that a person is minimally qualified to fly starships and smaller craft; a "navigator-4 rating" would be awarded to an individual who was able to show considerable expertise in selecting courses and vectors.

The ratings system guarantees that qualified personnel are in charge of a vessel. In this way, for example, a ship adheres to

the ICC if it is piloted by someone with a "pilot-1 rating". A world could further restrict operations, say by requiring a "pilot-2 rating" to move a ship beyond an orbital starport to within the world's atmosphere.

Further, a ship can be rated for various operations. A vessel that wanted a "mail rating" would need certain installed weaponry and a qualified gunner; a vessel to transport living plants would need a fully pressurized hold to gain its rating; a passenger vessel would similarly need certain personnel and accommodations for its rating.

This system of certification built confidence in the consumer; a passenger need not worry about his comfort or safety if a vessel was ICC-rated for high passage travel, for example.

Transponders: The form and function of starship transponders was closely regulated by the ICC, which stated that the transponder must be tamper-proof once installed. Most factions maintain this certification virtually intact, although each faction now has its own seal. A faction's seal on a transponder case is sufficient evidence throughout the faction that the device meets minimum standards of operation as a black-box flight recorder and broadcast identification beacon.

Travel across faction borders requires getting the transponder recertified. The difficulty of the recertification depends on how friendly the two factions might be at any given time — or how liberally the starport offical's hands are "greased".

Weapons Aboard Ship: The ICC required that weapons carried as freight or cargo be in a non-operable condition; for simple weapons, this required only the removal of a firing pin. For advanced devices, it is not sufficient that power packs be shipped uncharged; the weapons themselves must be physically altered to prevent their accidental discharge without manipulation of the device by an expert. Personal weapons belonging to crew and passengers are an exception to this rule.

As far as installed weaponry goes, the ICC allowed sufficient weaponry for self-defense, but does not license military vessels or grant a "pirate rating". Vessels with excessive amounts of offensive armament were not able to become signatories.

Little of this has changed in the Shattered Imperium. However, carrying weapons as cargo or freight can be risky business these days since officials are jumpy if they see anything that even smells like "gun running" or other militant free-lance operations.

Traffic: A certified starport in a system directs all traffic within that system. Outward-bound vessels are directed to certain vectors so as not to interfere with other ships in the area; inbound ships were required by the ICC to report their vector within ten minutes of arriving in a system's 1,000 A.U. boundary, whether by jump or non-jump travel.

A ship arriving at this limit, then, might send a message and then wait 280 hours for a reply, almost 12 days. This may seem like a long time until one realizes that a ship with 1-G acceleration takes over 89 days to travel this distance. Needless to say, most ships exit jumpspace well within the 1,000 A.U. limit.

It should be noted that traffic regulations are among those most often flouted, particularly the ordinary reporting, the farther a starship gets from a world. Closer in, enforcement policies are correspondingly tougher. Proper reporting of positions would lessen the possibility of accidents, but it's difficult to convince the more independent-minded captains (particularly belters) to follow this procedure.

Data Format: Many standard form templates have been authorized by the ICC, including bills of lading and customs declarations. Use of these standard formats speeds up the buying and selling of goods by showing who owns them, where they come from, and how much they're worth.

Other standard layouts are used for identification and rating certifications. Falsifying any of these forms was an easy way to be blacklisted for up to 10 years by the ICCM.

The factional nature of the Sattered Imperium has wreaked havoc on this part of interstellar trade. Trade across faction borders has become increasingly difficult.

GAME EFFECTS

Upholding the law, breaking the law, and trying to escape the consequences of having broken the law are all actions that **MegaTraveller** characters engage in from time to time. By introducing *conflict* into a game, law allows a referee to keep characters busy and give players real motivations for their roles.

Characters in the Navy, Marines, Army, Scouts, Law Enforcer, and Bureaucrat careers are charged with enforcing various laws. Characters in the Diplomat, Bureaucrat, and Noble careers can change laws from time to time. All character careers, but particularly Merchant characters, must be careful to obey the laws. And self-respecting Pirates and Rogues (and occasionally the Barbarian) go out of their way to break laws.

The skill of most use in staying on the right side of he law is *admin* — experience with bureaucratic agencies and an understanding of the requirements of dealing with and managing them. When confronted by a supercilious official on a world with a high law level, admin skill can come in handy to persuade him to let the characters off the hook. Before any confrontation reaches that level, streetwise skill can be invaluable in tipping characters off to local conditions as they apply to legal and illegal activities.

Any of these skills would be important in formulating rolls for tasks related to law. A few are already given in the **MegaTraveller** rules — others can be easily invented as needed.

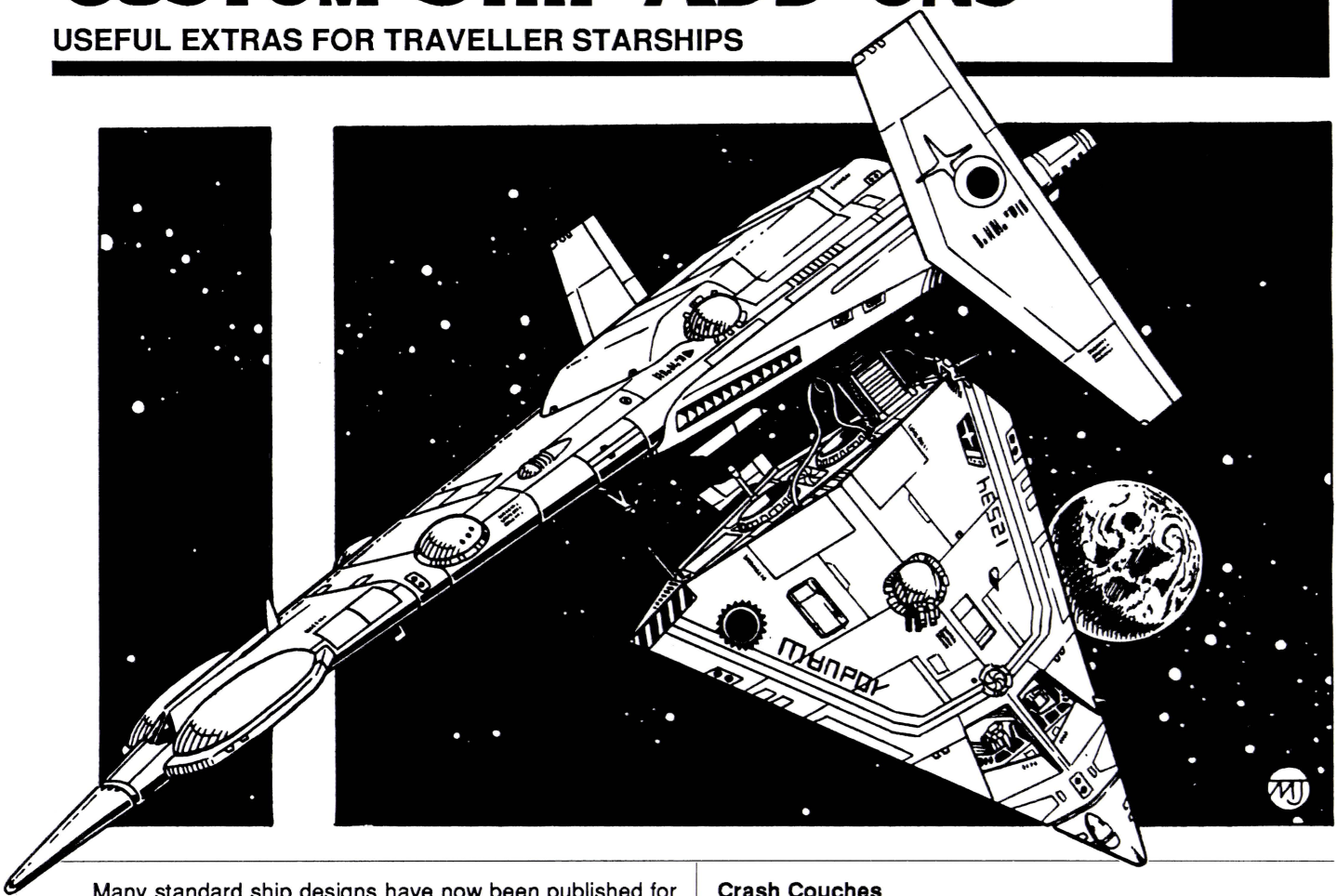
The institution of the ICC and its descendents in the various factions allows the referee to dispense with the pesky day-to-day details except in those circumstances in which she wishes to apply a special condition for the sake of the game. The certifications granted by the ICCM can be used to explain several game-specific terms, such as crew skill ratings and starport classes. The proper ratings could also make the tasks of gaining freight and passengers easier.

As far as specific laws that characters could run afoul of, low justice offenses might be such crimes as smuggling and forgery. Middle justice would include bribery, the introduction of high technology to low-technology worlds (where that introduction is proscribed), violation of a faction's Naval interdiction, and violation of the Interstellar rules of war (like using nuclear weapons to squelch a local rebellion). Finally, high justice offenses that characters in starships might commit could be transportation or possession of slaves, piracy, and the theft of faction Navy'/Army/Ruler's property. Any of these crimes could become the basis for an adventure, whether the characters are on the good side or the bad side — or caught in the middle.

If characters do get in trouble, the proper punishment must be levied against them. Possibilities include loss of CCM ratings, fines, imprisonment, and seizure of ship and goods. Severity would depend on the nature of the offense, the law level of the enforcing authority, whether the characters are repeat offenders, and whether bribes or other ameliorating inducements are successfully offered.•

CUSTOM SHIP ADD-ONS

USEFUL EXTRAS FOR TRAVELLER STARSHIPS



Many standard ship designs have now been published for **MegaTraveller.** However, many of us would like to be able to make our ships a little bit special. Given here are some custom modifications which can be added to a given ship design.

LEGAL EQUIPMENT

The following are legal additions to starships designed for MegaTraveller.

Liquid Crystal Surface

A ship or vehicle can be coated in liquid crystal display tiles. They are linked together and controlled by a small computer console. This enables the captain to change the appearance of the vehicle at the flick of a switch. A number of standard patterns are stored in the console but they are completely user-configurable. Applications include camouflage, company logos, advertising, and false ID.

360° Turret

The 360° turret is a special rotating ball design that allows a nearly spherical field of fire. It is secured to a telescopic boom. A cutout device is fitted to keep the weapon inside the turret from firing on its own ship or the boom. If these are used move one column up on the batteries bearing table. One disadvantage of the design is its vulnerability to enemy fire. For this reason some captains choose to "man" this turret remotely or by robot brain.

Crash Couches

A crash couch is a grav reinforced acceleration couch designed to be impact worthy to 6G impacts in any axis. Whether the occupant survives the subsequent effects of the crash is another matter. They are mostly found on military vehicles.

Umbilical Docking Tube

The umbilcal docking tube allows the ship to dock with other ships and space habitats, etc., without actually coming into close physical contact. A distance of up to 50 meters may be maintained. The tube is fully pressurised but no grav plates or inertial compensation units are fitted. It consists of a telescoping transparent reinforced plastisteel tube. At the far end are fittings which allow attachment to a standard airlock or, in emergencies, hatches or even the hull surface. Once docking is completed, the tube is pressurized. It can be stored externally around an airlock but special fairings are required to maintain streamlining.

EW Missile

The electronic warfare missile is usually carried by vessels without comprehensive EW facilities. It performs the role of an EMS jammer with a planetary range and is only launched during hostilities. It is completely autonomous but can be remotely controlled. Missiles are disposable but can be recovered; this is rare as the launching ship is usually either in pieces or far away.

Decoy Missile

In times of danger, a decoy missile may be launched. It

simulates the launching ship in all electromagnetic and neutrino aspects. These missiles are usually capable of fooling sensors of lower TLs but stand very little chance against higher TLs.

Water Flotation Bubbles

These are used in number of different ways. As an emergency device, they can keep the parent ship afloat indefinitely after it has been forced to ditch in liquid. Another application is to save power during ocean refuelling as not all vessels float naturally. Bubbles use either high pressure air bottles in emergencies, or compressors for routine use.

Ablative Shielding

When travelling through atmosphere, the speed of a vessel must usually be retarded to avoid excess hull warming. Ablative shielding eliminates this need. It comes in the form of pressure-blown foam which is applied to the leading edges of a vessel. Such shielding can be lifesaving when a quick exit may be called for. The weight, volume, and cost represent the equipment needed per application per 1000 kl of hull space. Multiply this by 1.5 for esigns using an airframe. It takes 1 man hour to apply per 1000 kl of hull surface.

High Performance Fuel Scoops

For ships that must often refuel and make an exit in a hurry, these high performance scoops may be just the ticket. They consist of special high by-pass inlets and high pressure pumps. They allow scooping hydrogen fuel at the rate of 40% of hull tonnage of fuel per hour.

Medical Bay

All ships should have some sort of medical facilities. This is a standard small ship bay. It has the facilities and supplies for 2 permanent patients (ie. beds) and 15 others. Advanced medical and diagnostic equipment allow its use by those with a skill of Medical 2 although qualified doctors will of course do better.

Low Maintenance Drives

Both jump and maneuver draves may be obtained in low maintenance designs. Special self checking computers monitor the adjustments, and extra-sturdy parts are used. When buying low maintenance drives, multiply the volume and weight by 1.5 and the cost by 1.2. A drive's hit points are multiplied by 1.2. These designs only need an overhaul every two years instead of the usual one. The number of engineers in the crew is multiplied by 0.8 per drive.

High Performance Drives

Maneuver drives can, with the use of special design and parts, be given up to 50% higher performance than usual. When buying high performance drives multiply weight and volume by 0.8 and cost by 1.2. Because of their fine tuning they require more maintenance. Multiply the number of engineers required by 1.2.

Ground Defense Turrets

Vessels landing on wilderness planets may need some form of ground defense. The main ship weapons are usually ill suited for this task, if only because they can demolish much more than is desired. Small blister ground defense turrets are available for

CUSTOM STARSHIP ADDITIONS

Item	*Power*	*Wt.*	*Vol.*	*Price*	*Notes*
LCD surface	0.005	0.001	-	0.0001	per kl of hull
360° turret	1*	x1.5	x1.5	0.01	
crash couch	0.001	0.03	4.5	0.001	
umbilical docking tube	0.001	0.09	35	0.025	
EW Missile	-	0.06	0.1	0.1	
decoy missile	-	0.05	0.08		
flotation bubbles	0.001	0.5	5	0.005	per 100 tons disp.
ablative shielding	-	0.0015	0.1	0.001	per 1000 KL of hull
medical bay	0.003	205	35	1.5	
ground defence turret	1*	0.5	1	1*	of turret only
winch	0.001	0.2	0.01	0.001	
interior design	-	-	-	0.015	per KL
swimming pool	0.008	0.008	0.01	0.001	per KL of liquid
gymnasium	0.001	0.5	30	0.002	
variable transponder	0.007	0.014	0.014	8.5	if available
miltary sensor suite	2*	2*	2*	x2	if available
turret camouflage	-	-	-	0.003	per turret
pop up turret	-	-	x1.5	0.01	per turret

Notes...
Power in Mw
Wt. in Tons
Vol. in Kl
Price in MCr

*1 as weapon
*2 as specific sensor

such needs. They can mount any weapon from LMGs to RFY-15s. They are either manually controlled or set to automatic control using the anti-hijack program, e.g., fire on targets with no ID within 50 meters.

Winch

Vehicles, aircraft, and space vessels sometimes carry a winch for rescue and utility use. The cable may carry a heavy-duty magnetic grapple, a hook, or a personnel sling, according to present need. A winch is housed in streamlined fairing, usually above a door or airlock to enable visual sighting and confirmation of the end position.

LUXURY FITTINGS

The following items are sometimes nice to have as a part of a starship design, but because of their added cost they are considered luxury fittings.

Interior Designs

In some private and luxury space vessels, an element of sumptuousness may be required. The interior furniture and fixtures in this package are the last word in luxury: deep pile carpets, art, sculptures, holo walls, rare plants, real wood panelling, and rare metal fittings are just some of the items offered. Price is per KL of such opulence.

Swimming Pool

If you own a private space vessel, this is the ultimate in one-upmanship, an on board swimming pool. The cost, volume, and weight figures are per KL of liquid (water, ammonia, champagne, whatever). This represents pumping equipment, filters, and consumable stores. A whirlpool is usually included in the price.

If one or more crew members are from a naturally aquatic race, this luxury item may be a necessity. With the help of a creative tax lawyer, it may even be a business expense.

Gymnasium

The gymnasium unit contains a variety of excercise machines, weights, and mats, etc., to facilitate physical excercise. This is not always luxury; long space voyages can result in real loss of conditioning for crew and passengers alike. Also, if the destination planet has higher gravity than the planet of origin, those on board will wish to prepare for it by exercising in artificially raised gravity. Up to 4 people can use a standard gym simultaneously. Military vessels usually have larger rooms devoted to physical conditioning.

ILLEGAL EQUIPMENT

This equipment is not on the open market. Finding an item from this list is a task:

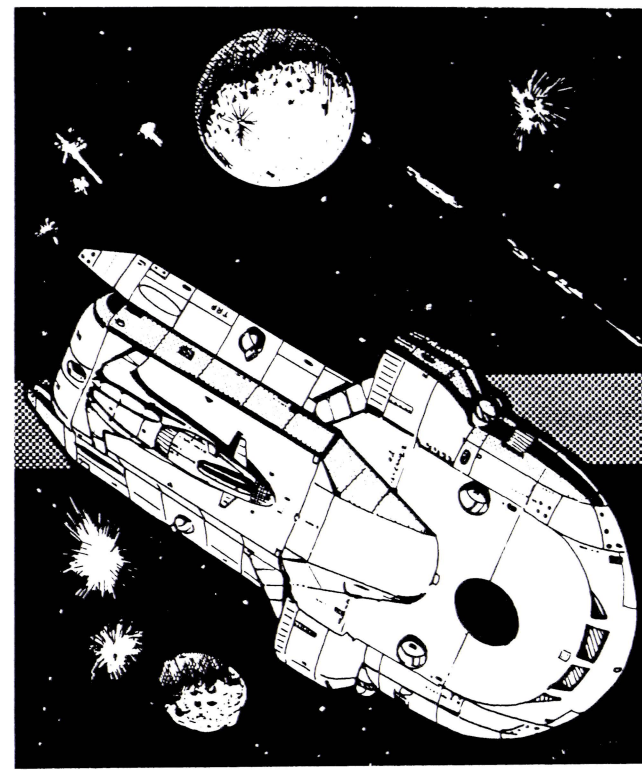
To locate a piece of illegal equipment for sale:

Difficult, Streetwise or Intrusion, Bribery or Forgery, 1 day

Referee: This task increases to Formidable if law level is 8+, decreases to Routine on a planet regularly used by smugglers, pirates, etc.

Variable Transponder

A variable transponder is similar to the type used by military vessels in that it is completely configurable to transmit any ID code. It is an invaluable aid to smugglers, pirates, and extralegal travellers. It is housed in a concealed and grav shielded mount on the ship's hull. The transponder element is only one part of the complete package. To complement this, a simulation program feeds the sealed legal transponder/flight recorder with false and



usually "squeaky clean" information on the ship's actions and whereabouts. A specially made active antenna effectively eliminates this unit's transmissions. Thus a ship fitted with the whole system could transmit what it wanted but the flight recorder would record normal activities. The system is almost foolproof but concerted search would uncover it and the sentence for possession of such an item is very stiff. As can be imagined the units are extremely difficult to get and are very expensive (cost is up to the referee). This does not deter most prospective buyers.

Military Sensor Suite

A military sensor suite is effectively one tech level higher than the prevailing TL. When buying one, double the cost of the particular unit given in the standard tables.

Turret Camouflaging

In certain areas of the Imperium, it is wise not to advertise that your ship is armed. Camouflaging blends the turret into the surrounding color scheme and physical appearance. Although it is not fool-proof, it is quite effective.

Pop-up Turret

To conceal completely the fact that a ship is armed, the turret can be concealed behind sliding panels. When the panels slide back, the turret extends to its firing position in about 2 seconds. Only unmanned turrets can be concealed on this way. When calculating the volume of the turret, multiply by 1.5. •

Q&A

OFFICIAL ANSWERS TO YOUR MEGATRAVELLER GAMING QUESTIONS

In the MegaTraveller *Referee's Manual,* pg. 66, Table 6: do only vehicles require suspensions, or do small craft and space vehicles also require suspensions? — B.B.

Yes, only vehicles require suspensions. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

I have seen MT designs with the crew in small staterooms rather than in standard ones. In classic Traveller, a small stateroom represented accommodations for small craft to perform long duration missions. If they represent only a fresher, a cot, and a closet for a change of clothing, they can't function as regular staterooms. How do small and regular staterooms differ in MT? — L.G.

You want the biggest accommodations you can afford to provide. But if you are pressed for space, even just a bunk is okay. Compare the space available for crew in a U.S Navy destroyer to the space for crew in an U.S. Navy aircraft carrier. Some guys just bunks in the engine room on the destroyer. You take whatever you can get and don't complain if you are low enough on the totem pole. Not fun, but livable.

In other words, a small stateroom has whatever you can cram into it, and varies as much as what's in the average bedroom in the USA. A small stateroom is generally for one person, while a large stateroom is plush for one person, or "cozy" for two. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

In the MegaTraveller *Referee's Manual,* page 81 tells about adding computers to your design. The sentence "A computer multiplies ..." is unclear. Does a computer's abilities reduce the number of control panels needed? If yes, does it reduce total CPs by 'maximum CP input' times 'CP multiplier'? — M.P.

Think of the things you install on your craft as "hungry" for control point food. The control panels, multiplied by the computer, provide control point food to the craft — they "feed" the craft, which is hungry for control points. If the control panel output times the computer multiplier does not totally satisfy the control point hunger of the craft, the craft will not work right — it is out of control.

The input CP is the maximum control panel input the computer can handle. If you try to connect too many control panel CPs to the input side of the computer, you will overload it and burn it out. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

Okay, I have a question here. In the *Referee's Manual,* on page 53, step 3 "Tech level effects", it says to subtract destination TL from source TL and multiply the result by .10. Since this result can be negative, and it is to be multiplied to the adjusted price, wouldn't you have a negative price?

For example, a cargo's price is Cr4000 after modifiers. The source TL (9) minus the destination TL (12) multiplied by .10 is -.30. This multiplied by 4000 equals -1200. Is this the price or is Cr2800 the price? I am somewhat confused in this matter. — J.M.

More accurately the price formula for cargo is:

P = p + [p x (St - Dt)]

Where:
P = final price
p = adjusted price so far
St = source world tech level x 0.10
Dt = destination world tech level x 0.10

So in the example you give, the computation is:

P = 4000 + [4000 x (0.9 - 1.2)]

Computing inside the parentheses gives ...

P = 4000 + [4000 x -0.3]

And again ...

P = 4000 + [-1200]

So ...

P = 4000 - 1200, or a final price of Cr2800.

Sorry for the confusion. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

In the *Referee's Manual* on page 82, when determining the flight crew — if carried craft have accommodations, do designers need to allow accommodations on the carrying craft as well? — B.B.

It depends on if you want the carried craft to be fresh when used, or to take the risk of having the carried craft "all used up" when you get there. Generally, I would think you *do not* want to rely on the carried craft's accommodations.

Duration and comfort is another factor. If the accommodations of the carrier are nicer and last a lot longer, the crew of the carried craft will opt to stay in the carrier's accommodations. Think of today's aircraft carriers. Who would want to sleep in the cockpit their fighter jet? — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

Should page 28 of the Referee's Manual, paragraph 35 read, "... For worlds: Roll World Size - 1D."? The current wording seems backwards. — A.P.

Yes, the formula should be Size - 1D. The formula was accidently typed in backwards. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

Concerning drop capsules, what are the costs, volume, weight, and power requirements for a drop capsule launch tube? What is the storage requirement for a drop capsule that is expected to be used (i.e., it's not just cargo)? — J.W.

I'd treat a drop capsule just like a standard HE missile except multiply everything by four. Making the drop capsule large enough to hold a person, plus adding life support should just about quadruple everything. So what does this give us?

We have volume=0.4 kiloliters, weight=0.2 tons, and price=Cr80,000. As to power, figure a self-contained basic environment and life support using 0.001 Mw.

Launch tubes are easy: just follow the guidelines on page 82 of the *Referee's Manual. — Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

Shouldn't combat rifleman be included under gun combat cascade skill? A merchant can learn to use an FGMP-15, but can't learn combat rifleman skill. — J.W.

A merchant typically can't learn combat rifleman skill — if that's what you want your character to learn, then don't join the merchants. When building a character generation system, you have to go with what is typical, not what is atypical. If you include the atypical, then why have distinct career types? Every career could learn any skill if you want to allow for all the possible exceptions. Restrictions, limitations, and trade-offs are what makes something a challenge, you know.

If you have a merchant character who insists he be able to learn how to use an FGMP, muster him out at whatever age he currently is and make him start the game. He can then have learning how to use an FGMP as an adventure goal for his character and you can handle it as an exception. But I would recommend you not muddy up the character creation system by adding easy access to combat skills for civilian careers.

Always remember however, it's *your* Traveller game. If you prefer to add combat rifleman to the cascade skill list when your players generate characters, then go right ahead. By all means, do what you think is the most fun, regardless of what the rulebook says! — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

I think Naval Architect skill ought to be added to Space Tech cascade skill. I'd like an official ruling on this. — D.T.

This sounds like a reasonable addition to the Space Tech cascade skill list. I don't know why we didn't think of it ourselves. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

Does EMM masking include the optical chameleon hull discussed in *Starship Operator's Manual?* — D.T.

Yes it does, since visible light is just one segment of the electromagnetic spectrum. Still, it clears up any confusion to explicitly state EMM masking *does* include the optical chameleon hull discussed in *Starship Operator's Manual. — Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

Since slow communication causes feudalism, and the Imperial region has a feudal government structure, why don't you die the tech level first when generating a world, then fit the form of government later on? At least a world with a low tech level should be balkanized more than a high tech level world. A high tech level world ought to have a more democratic government because the good internal communication would allow it (e.g., voting and pluralism). — J.M.

Rolling the population independent of world conditions and rolling the government independent of the tech level does indeed create some odd and alien situations. But odd, alien situations are the stuff of good science fiction, even if it does lead to head scratching now and then! We believe this "quirk" of the UWP generation process is primarily a strength rather than a shortcoming.

Some of our most enjoyable DGP staff discussions have occurred while trying to explain odd combinations of UWP stats. If you were to get too logical about how the stats are created, you would get too many worlds that are just earth's cultural biases transplanted to a strange environment — kind of a planetary version of flat aliens.

A couple other aspects of your question intrigue me and I'd like to explore them a bit. Along the way, maybe we can broaden your horizons and help you become more comfortable with the idea of truly alien worlds where so called "strange" ideas actually might make a certain kind of sense — even to the point of making our own views seem naive. We'll take a devil's advocate position and explore the possibility your question reflects some unconscious biases.

First, your question implies you believe science and technology encourages benevolent behavior. After all, rapid communication will make people want to be nice to each other, right? What about a charismatic person who wanted to get control of the world, and seemed benevolent, even ingenious on the outside — but secretly had selfish or even hateful intentions. Remember Hitler? He seemed like a pretty nice guy at first, otherwise no one would have paid any attention to him. With global communications, such a charismatic ruler with "all the answers" would have powerful tools for coming to global domination. Then if that person turned out to have a hurtful secret agenda, a high tech world could get an oppressive form of government, *and the technology will have made it all the more likely.*

The problem is thinking high technology forces people to want to be nice to each other. It does not. People will be people regardless of how advanced their technology may be. Just look at the worsening trend in America's crime statistics if you don't believe this is so.

Another implication in your question is that democracy — a government where the masses rule — is the "best" or "highest" form of government. Did you know many of America's founding fathers detested democracy, fearing that the masses could become misguided, causing a democracy to rapidly decay into little more than mob rule. They even sited several cases where this had happened in history — pure democracies don't last, they argued.

The founding fathers preferred a *republic* to a democracy. A republic is government by responsible representatives whose full-time job (while they are representatives) is to understand the issues, study them, and make carefully considered decisions, all while answering to the masses. Direct rule by the masses could be dangerous since the masses (who typically have more important day-to-day concerns than "governing") would most likely decide issues by the seat of their pants rather than with prolonged and thoughtful consideration.

Thus a democracy where the masses themselves actually rule might become its own worst enemy. While such a form of government might work okay if its majority maintained a benevolent outlook and *everyone* studied the issues — this is a *big* if. True, technology could help the masses stay informed, but it won't *make* them do so.

More likely, such a full democracy would eventually go sour and get rather ugly. Think of how a vigilante mob works and you'll get the picture. All it takes for the majority to go astray is for the masses to be swayed by an influential, charismatic person who sounds good, regardless of the true merit of his arguments. We've seen how high technology could actually cause such an unscrupulous individual have more sway than he might have without the technology — and we've come full circle back to my first point.

The power of America's government isn't necessarily its democratic orientation but the sheer far-sightedness of America's founding fathers. They assumed those given governing power tend toward subversive self-interest and thus made sure no single group had free rein — not even the masses. (An interesting study is to see where America's founding fathers got their ideas — who did they most read, quote, and study?)

But besides all this, don't just assume our way is the ideal combination of government and technology, or that our "civilized" society is an outgrowth of technology alone. If people in power have malevolent intentions, technology — rather than hindering them — can be a powerful assistant. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

Do you have any suggestions for me on how to integrate different parts of the body in combat hits? — J.M.

Yes, we do. In issue number 13 of the *Travellers' Digest,* we covered how to allocate damage to various body parts. These rules are optional, but can be useful from time to time. Unfortunately, issue 13 of the *Travellers' Digest* is long out of print. But don't despair. For those of you who were never able to get this issue, here is the body part damage location page, reprinted out of the issue number 13 (we've also clarified a couple of points, so if you've already got *Digest* 13, you still might want to look this page over, too). — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

What happens if a vacc suit is penetrated in a hostile atmosphere? — J.M.

GDW's product *Knightfall* has guidelines for administering a vacc suit breech. For your convenience, we've reprint the breech nugget from Knightfall. I recommend you pick up a copy of *Knightfall,* it's loaded with useful material just like this breech nugget (but then we're biased since DGP's staff wrote, edited, and art-directed it).

Breech! (Reprinted from the GDW product, *Knightfall)*
Character in a vacc suit suffers a suit breech.
Location is any vacuum world.

Scene: Suddenly, from inside your suit, you can hear the muffled "hiss" of your suit's life-sustaining atmosphere leaking away. You desperately need to get a patch on the hole before it is too late...

Action: Use this nugget to administer a vacc suit breech for any character, whether PC or NPC.

Some vacc suits are self-sealing when breached, and others are not. The higher tech level suits are the ones that tend to be self-sealing, as long as the breech is not too major. Generally speaking, the self-sealing vacc suits depend on tech level:

- TL12- not self-sealing
- TL13+ self-sealing

As long as the hit is only low penetration, a self-sealing suit will seal the hole. The suit's occupant still takes the hit point damage, however.

For example, if the wearer of a tech 15 vacc suit (armor value 7) gets hit by a gauss rifle round (penetration 7 out to very long range), the resulting hit is a low penetration one (since the rifle penetration is equal to the suit's armor value, but less than twice the suit's armor value). A low penetration hit does 50% damage, which means the gauss rifle's basic 3 hit points becomes 1 hit point (3 x 0.5 = 1.5, which is just 1 since we ignore fractions). The low penetration hit on the tech 15 vacc suit self-seals, but the wearer still takes the 1 hit point of damage.

If, on the other hand, the wearer of the tech 15 vacc suit was to be hit with a laser rifle-13 (penetration 20 out to medium range), the hit (if at medium range or less) would be a high penetration one, resulting in the wearer taking the laser rifle's full damage of 3 hit points. In this case, the 3 hit points breach the suit, and it must be patched to stop the leak.

While exceptional success may change the amount of damage made on the suit's occupant, exceptional success does not change the penetration level. For example, exceptional success may result in a hit that does 2 points of damage to the wearer of the suit, but the hit remains a low penetration one and the suit still self-seals.

On a pinpoint hit or a hit on a target under cover, however, damage is computed by first dividing the armor value by 2, which could result in a high penetration hit (the helmet face plate has been hit, for instance). A self-sealing suit does not automatically seal on a high penetration hit.

Patching a Breach: Once a character's suit has been breached, the critical priority becomes getting a patch on the hole before too much internal suit atmosphere is lost. Nearly all suits include a pocket with a patch kit (5 patches). Patching a suit involves getting out a patch, peeling the protective sheet from the patch's adhesive backing, and slapping on the patch. See the following task:

To apply a patch to a breeched vacc suit:
Routine, Dex, 2 sec

Referee: Since a combat round is only 6 sec, be sure to roll for the time duration (it could take more than one combat round to get the suit patched). The suit occupant may try this task if still conscious (however, see *Panic,* below).

If the suit has not been patched after the first combat round, apply 1 hit point of damage per round to the suit occupant until the suit is patched. Do not apply any damage on the round the suit is patched.

Panic (optional): When a breech occurs, have the suit occupant first roll a determination task to keep from panicking. If able to avoid panicking, the suit occupant can try to patch his own breeched suit.

— *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

What are the tech levels of the Major Races? — J.M.

Strictly speaking, there is no one tech level for each major race, just as there is no one tech level for the Shattered Imperium. Each major world per system has its own tech level. But the maximum tech level you find for worlds in the Imperium is TL 15/16, with the emphasis on tech 15, although the tech 16 worlds are getting ever more frequent.

As for the Solomani, tech level 14/15 is the maximum, with tech 15 worlds few and far between.

The Zhodani are also a maximum tech level of 14/15, but tech 15 worlds are more common than in Solomani space.

The Hiver maximum tech level is 15/16 with the tech level 16 worlds appearing more frequently all the time. The Hivers are well on their way to becoming the technological leaders of charted space.

The Aslan are a solid maximum of tech 14, with an occasional tech level 15 world thrown in here and there.

The K'kree are the most conservative technologically, with a maximum of tech level 13, although a few tech level 14 worlds show up on rare occasions.

It's anybody's guess what the tech level maximum of the Vargr as a race is. Since they can't even build things of consistent

DAMAGE TO SPECIFIC BODY PARTS

1 Ways a Character Can Become Sick or Injured

A character can become injured in one of three ways:

- **Failing a survival roll during character generation**
  Proceed to step 2a.
- **Suffering a mishap during a task attempt**
  Proceed to step 2b.
- **Taking a hit during combat**
  Proceed to step 2c.

2a Failing a Survival Roll During Character Generation

If the character failed his survival roll (including the DMs) by 2 or more, exceptional failure has occurred, and he should roll 3D on the mishap table; otherwise, he should roll 2D on the mishap table. Then proceed to step 2b.

2b Suffering a Mishap During a Task Attempt

If the referee so decides, a mishap can result in bodily harm to the character. In that case, use the following table as a guide for determining wounds from a mishap:

Mishap Level	*Wounds*
Superficial	1D
Minor	2D
Major	3D
Destroyed	4D

Proceed to step 3.

2c Taking a Hit During Combat

To assess the damage done to a character, count up the number of damage points he received during combat. For each damage point received, roll 1D and apply the result as wound damage. See step 3 for guidelines in applying wound damage.

3 Applying Wound Damage

For each 1D rolled, apply its result entirely to *one* characteristic.

All characteristics are eligible for receiving damage, although you should prefer the three physical stats Str, Dex, and End; Int, Edu, and Soc wounding is more rare.

The referee is responsible for determining which characteristic receives the wound damage.

Int or Edu: If Int or Edu are damaged, and if the total of all the skill levels exceeds the new Int+Edu after medical treatment is completed, the healed character will be required to drop enough skills to comply with his new limit. On rare occasions, medical treatment can restore some lost levels of Int or Edu.

Soc: Social standing wounding is the most rare, but when it does occur, it typically means a wound to highly visible areas such as the face or hands has taken place.

The referee can use Soc damage as a good buffer to "absorb" a few excess damage points that may otherwise kill a player character.

Soc damage points should be permanent (relatively speaking, of course. A character can generally correct the problem with expensive plastic surgery treatment).

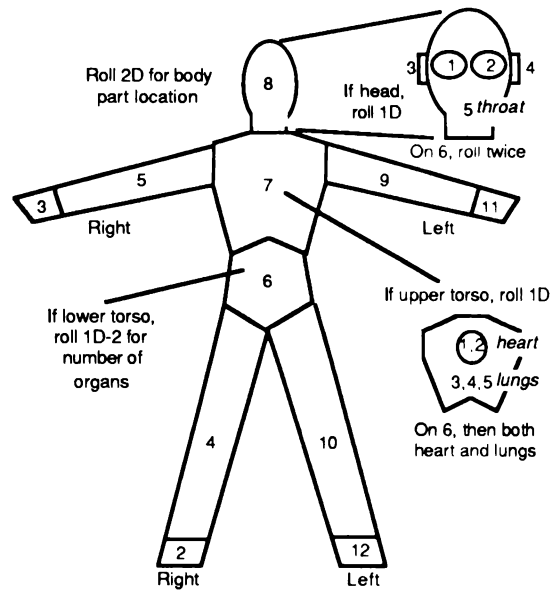
For example, a loss of 6 to Soc means that the highest attainable Soc becomes 9 and the character can never become a noble.

4 Determine Which Body Part Was Affected

Using the table below, re-assess the final damage level.

Observed value of characteristics	*Damage Level*
None at zero (flesh wound)	Superficial
1 at zero (moderate wound)	Minor
2 at zero (serious wound)	Major
3 at zero (death)	Destroyed

Roll 2D on the following chart to determine which body part was affected. Roll twice for major damage, and roll three times for destroyed damage.



Notes: An arm that needs replaced includes the associated hand as well; a leg that needs replaced also includes the associated foot.

Even though a vital organ such as the heart or lungs may need to be replaced, the character is still alive. The indicated vital organ has been permanently damaged and may cease to function at any time (referee's discretion).

The reason the brain is not included in the possible head locations is simple: these rules assume that whenever the brain has been damaged beyond repair, the character has died.

tech levels in a single device, and they borrow (steal?) more technology than they invent, it makes it very difficult to judge. But a maximum of tech level 13 is not uncommon in the Vargr extents.— *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

How many dollars is a credit equal to in buying power? — J.M.

A credit is roughly equal to one US dollar in buying power. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

What happens to the armor rating in combat if a character with a bionic arm — which has its own armor rating — then wears additional armor? What armor value must be penetrated? — S.H.

Two issues are really part of this question: 1) When penetrating multiple layers of armor, what is the final effective armor value of all the layers together, and 2) If you don't use a hit location system, how do you factor in the effects of parts of a character being more heavily armored than other parts? Let's take each of these questions in order.

The best way to explain the answer to the first question is to look at an example. Let's say your character's bionic arm has an armor value of 5. Further, let's say you are wearing a vacc suit with an armor value of 10. Find the mod of each kind of armor from the Armor Table on page 63 of the *Referee's Manual,* and add the two mods together, then find the armor value closest to the new mod (but not more than the new mod). For our example, armor 5 has a mod of 1.25 and armor 10 has a mod of 2.50. Looking down the mod column, we find a mod of 3.54 is the closest to the new mod of 3.75 (the next highest mod, 3.84 is too big). Reading across from the 3.54 we find a combined armor value of 14.

As for question two, I'd just figure the extra armor as shown above, and then pick some appropriate roll of 1D to see if the arm was the hit location. For instance, I'd say a 1/6 chance of hitting the one arm is about right, so we could just have the player roll 1D for a 6, and if he rolled a 6, the arm was hit, otherwise some other part of his body was hit. Quick and dirty perhaps, but it works and it keeps the combat session moving. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

In the MegaTraveller *Referee's Manual* on page 87 the rules discuss active object scan and active object pinpoint. The table implies if something is close, like distant or less, then it is a formidable task to scan. However, if something is at interstellar distance it is a simple task to scan. Why is this? Wouldn't something close be easier to scan than something far away? — R.M.

You are obviously thinking the table shows the range to the *object.* No, the table shows the range limit (that is, the strength) of the *sensor.*Since the strength of the sensor is what the table shows, it makes sense that weaker sensors — those with a shorter range — are less sensitive.

All other things being equal, the task to use a less sensitive sensor to find an object will be more difficult. That's why shorter range sensors have higher difficulty levels.

As you can see, if you look at the table as the range to an object rather than the range limit of the sensor, you will find the table does look backwards — and that's exactly what you did wrong. I hope this explanation clears up the problem for you. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

The maps in MegaTraveller only show explored and inhabited systems. Where are the other celestial objects such as nebulae, neutron stars, pulsars, or quasars? — A.G.

Unless they are navigational hazards as part of a parsec with a system, they are generally not shown. Plus the galaxy is a big place, with charted space representing less than one-tenth of one percent of the Milky Way galaxy. The stellar "oddities" you mention do occur, but they are uncommon. While their numbers may approach the thousands or tens of thousands of objects per galaxy, with the puny portion of our galaxy represented by charted space, one or two such objects might likely occur.

And we do meet the odds with one such object: the dark nebula in Dark Nebula sector. But it's a rather unspectacular nebula as far as nebulae go. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

What do the parenthetical numbers mean after the indirect fire ranges on pages 76-77 of the Referee's Guide? — C.W.

These are the actual ranges in kilometers. These numbers were based on ranges from Striker. In some cases the ranges were "fudged" slightly to make them better fit into a certain range band or to spread the ranges a more evenly between weapons. So they are close to Striker values, but not always exactly the same.— *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

I noticed in MTJ#3 that Vincennes (Hi Pop TL 16) has 120,000 tons of ships allocated for antipiracy/patrol operations. How can I estimate the tonnage of ships for other planets? — M.S.

There is an interesting tendency in Traveller we notice from time to time: the desire to reduce everything to formula and leave nothing to imagination or judgement. We came up with the number of 120,000 tons from the air. Just made it up — no formulas, no computer programs, no tables on which we rolled dice. Surprised? You shouldn't be.

Consider this: could you produce a formula that would give you the size of the air force of every major military power on earth today? No, not really. That's because every country has to consider its budget, its philosophy, and its priorities at the time. There have been tables produced in old GDW products like *Striker, Fifth Frontier War, Trillion Credit Squadron,* and old back issues of *Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society* for system troop strengths and system defense boat (SDB) strengths. One could extrapolate the data you seek from that, I suppose.

Myself, I prefer the seat-of-the-pants method. I believe you can get so legalistic you forget to be imaginative and can get into a rut of needing to detail everything or have a formula for everything. Deciding how many tons of anti-piracy patrols will also vary over time, so you can't win. Just estimate, based on the system's population a number of tons that sounds good, and go from there. Who's going to tell you that you're wrong? If they do complain, ask them "how do you know?"

Unless you need this level of detail for the system, the standard encounter tables from the *Referee's Gaming Kit* (reprinted here for those of you who missed that product) should do nicely for most in-system encounters. The extra level of detail is just "bean-counting busywork" and doesn't really further the adventure. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

After damage has been assessed, are the character's new stats used to compute a different, lower life force while

SPACE SETTING ENCOUNTERS

Die	Type
2	No encounter
3	No encounter
4	No encounter
5	Predetermined*
6	Merchant
7	Merchant
8	Merchant
9	Predetermined*
10	Civilian
11	Non-starship
12	Naval/Scout/Xboat
13	Naval/Scout/Xboat

DMs:
Starport A/B, DM + 1
Starport E, DM – 1
Starport X, DM – 5
Scout/Naval Base, DM + 2
High Pop (9+), DM + 1

* Predetermined means use one of the space encounters from the published adventure you are running, or an encounter you have previously designed to fit the plot line of your own adventure.

DISPOSITION (ALL TYPES)

Die	Type
2-3	Hasty Leaving
4-5	Leaving
6-8	Standing By
9-10	Arriving
11-12	Hasty Arriving

NAVAL SHIP TYPE

Die	Type
2	Fuel Shuttle
3	Fighter
4	Carrier (100K tons)
5	Escort (5K tons)
6	Fast Courier
7	Patrol Escort
8	Escort (1K tons)
9	Cruiser (20K tons)
10	Cruiser (50K tons)
11	Cruiser (100K tons)
12	Battleship (200K tons)

NAVAL SHIP MISSION

Die	Type
2	in Distress
3-4	Escort
5-6	Courier
7-8	Patrol
9	Transfer
10	Maneuvers
11	Transport
12	Privateering

SCOUT SHIP TYPE

Die	Type
2	Xboat Tender
3	Scout Ship
4	Non-standard
5-6	Scout Ship
7-10	Survey Ship
11	Cruiser
12	Cruiser

DMs:
System only accessible by jump-2+, then DM + 4

SCOUT SHIP MISSION

Die	Type
2	in Distress
3	Smuggling
4	Escort
5-7	Courier
8	Transfer
9-11	Patrol
12	Privateering

Note:
If Survey Ship, replace Patrol with Survey.

XBOAT SHIP TYPE

Die	Type
2	Scout Courier
3	Scout Courier
4	Non-standard
5-7	Xboat
8-11	Xboat Tender
12	Xboat + Tender

XBOAT SHIP MISSION

Die	Type
2	in Distress
3-4	Courier
5-11	Communication
12	Piracy

MERCHANT SHIP TYPE

Die	Type
2	Freighter (1K+ tons)
3	Subsidized Merchant
4	Non-standard
5	Subsidized Merchant
6	Seeker
7	Free Trader
8	Subsidized Liner
9	Far Trader
10	Far Trader
11	Freighter (1K+ tons)
12	Freighter (5K+ tons)

DMs:
System only accessible by jump-2+, then DM + 4

CIVILIAN SHIP TYPE

Die	Type
2	Liner (1K+ tons)
3	Yacht
4	Non-standard
5	Yacht
6	Seeker
7	Detached Scout
8	Safari Ship
9	Merc Cruiser
10	Merc Cruiser
11	Lab Ship
12	Liner (5K tons)

DMs:
System only accessible by jump-2+, then DM + 4

NON-STARSHIP TYPE

Die	Type
2	Bulk Trans (1K+ tons)
3	Pinnance
4	Non-standard
5	Launch
6	Shuttle
7	Shuttle
8	Cutter
9	Tug
10	Ship's Boat
11	System Def Boat
12	System Def Boat

MERCHANT SHIP MISSIONS

Die	Type
2	in Distress
3	Smuggling
4-5	Trade
6-8	Trade & Transport
9-11	Transport
12	Piracy

Note:
If a Seeker, replace Transport with Prospecting.

CIVILIAN SHIP MISSIONS

Die	Type
2	in Distress
3	Smuggling
4	Courier
5	Charter
6-7	Transport
8	Pleasure Tour
9-11	Business
12	Piracy

Note:
If a Lab Ship, replace Business with Research.

NON-STARSHIP MISSIONS

Die	Type
2	in Distress
3	Smuggling
4	Courier
5	Charter
6-7	Courier
8-11	Transport
12	Piracy

Note:
If an SDB, replace Charter with Escort and replace Transport with Patrol.

the character is wounded and not yet healed? — C.M.

After the combat session is finished, any damage the character has taken to his life force is applied back to his stats. If the character enters combat again before any healing has taken place, you will use his lower, damaged life force he had at the end of the immediately previous combat session.

Now if some healing has taken place, you'll need to determine what his new, less-than-full life force might be, and use it in this next combat session about to take place.

But unless your character needs to go into combat, don't worry about figuring out his less-than-full life force. Only if the wounded character ends up in combat before he's healed is it worth checking to see what his life force values are before he's good as new again. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

How does exceptional success in hand to hand combat work? The *to hit* task is simple, so for a well-trained character, it's not at all difficult to achieve a +8 exceptional success hit and inflict a minimum of 4 damage points. This means a character using his bare fists (or a small animal attacking with just its teeth) can knock out an opponent wearing battle dress! — C.M.

Strictly speaking you are right. Exceptional success is intended to give even the underdog a chance of doing some damage to a formidable enemy. It works well as long as the target is not uniformly armored, or the penetration to armor ratio doesn't get absurd (like 10 to 1 or greater). Pounding on a starship hull of armor value 60 with your hands isn't likely do do anything — so you have to use common sense.

On targets that have some lightly armored locations (like a person in a vacc suit with the helmet off, or characters riding in an open-topped vehicle) an exceptional success hit (with zero penetration) that does damage is easy to explain: you just hit the lightly armored area. But completely enclosed targets are a different story. In retrospect, a couple of simple guidelines for using exceptional success in zero penetration situations eliminates most of the absurdities. Let's look at what those might be.

Ask yourself: is the target completely enclosed in armor? If so, then is the penetration less than one-tenth of the target's lightest* armor value? If this is the case, then ignore exceptional success. Your hit won't do any damage to the target, regardless of the type of attack (hand-to-hand, direct, or indirect fire).

In hand-to-hand combat, if you insist on making such a foolishly one-sided attack, you (the attacker) should take damage instead of the target (just "attack" yourself with a "club"). Most characters are smart enough to not attempt a hand-to-hand attack if they know they'll only hurt themselves. But animals or dumbots might not be so perceptive and will usually try the attack anyway — which could lead to some delightful moments in a combat session! — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

*lightest armor is used just in case the target's armor enclosure is not uniform.

What does the *to hit* task for an animal look like, since they don't have specific attributes like strength or dexterity? — C.M.

This is one of those embarrassing oversights. It's really pretty simple if you notice how life force numbers were derived for characters. You can approximate an animal's strength DM or dexterity DM quite easily. To see how, let's look at a sample animal encounter from a table.

Animal	*Weight*	*Hits*	*Armor*	*Wounds & Weapons*
6 Eaters	18000kg	12/6	cloth	21 teeth+1 A3 F9 S2

To determine the animal's estimated strength DM, simply add the two hit numbers together and divide by 5. In this example, (12+6) + 5 = a strength DM of +3. For the dexterity DM, use the animal's speed directly — which is this case is +2.

As you can see, these creatures would be a formidable opponent in a hand-to-hand fight. Keeping your distance would be prudent. — *Joe D. Fugate Sr.*

Why did you use the Primordials as the creators of the Shimmering City in *Knightfall*? It seems the Ancients make a lot more sense as the creators of the city and having them as the creators is a lot more fun than these "Primordials." — C.M.

We have always felt the Ancients could be overused in Traveller, and a little goes a long way. Plus, we have always wondered who the ancients were studying — haven't you? Thus the Primordials were born.

Like many things we do, the Primordials are not a last-minute add on to Traveller. We've been slowly orchestrating their appearance onto the Traveller scene since we did the *Referee's Gaming Kit.* Other products to include tidbits that all tie into this one story are *World Builder's Handbook* and the now defunct *Zhodani and K'kree* (Read this issue's Helm Report to find out why the Alien series has been cancelled).

Since the demise of the Alien series means you will never get the last link in the story tying all this together, I will spill the beans here. This is very secret stuff just for referees — if any players happen to read this, you'll ruin the surprise. So if you are a player rather than a referee, read on at your own risk.

Having so warned the players among you, let's talk about the Zhodani for a moment. As you may know, they are intently interested in exploring toward the core of the galaxy, prompted by a strange ancient's device that shows star journeys toward the galactic core. What if the Zhodani were to ultimately discover a scourge that follows them back home? We discussed this, giving birth to an idea we had been toying with for a while called "Baddies from the Core." Here is a summary of that idea, as transcribed by Terry McInnes.

Joe,

You may remember we had an extensive discussion last March of what the Baddies from the Core might be like. Here are my recollections from this discussion as well as some embellishments I've added in the meantime. This is a White Paper that you may use as you see fit as the MegaTraveller time-line progresses.

Terry McInnes

Here is a recollection of the "Baddies from the Core" as discussed at a DGP meeting the weekend of 23 March, 1990:

Why They Are Coming

The Baddies are a nomadic species roaming about the galaxy, exploring, searching, and learning. Because their psionic jump technique emits a sparkling pattern when their vessels enter and leave jump space, the Baddies become known first as the Sparklers. Of course, unknown to anyone else, the Sparklers and the Primordials are one in the same race. Later, once two

and two are put together, everyone calls this race what they are: the Primordials.

The Primordials never stay in any one area for long because they get bored. Being extremely powerful psionically, almost all activity and action they perform is done via mental manipulation rather than by physical manipulation. Quite by accident, the the Primordials and a Zhodani Core Expedition cross each other's path. The Primordials' interest in the Zhodani is peaked when their massive psionic minds encounter the minor psionic "fiddling" of the Zhodani in the area. Curious who these aliens are, the Sparklers ultimately follow the Zhodani home back along the core expedition corridor.

First Encounter with Humans

The Primordials' first encounter with humans is with a Zhodani Core Expedition advance Scout which is overwhelmed by a vast fleet of Sparkler vessels suddenly tumbling out of jump space. The cumulative mental power of the Primordials' collective mind accidentally kills any Zhodani who have any psionic ability. The proletarian survivors panic and open fire, and are themselves destroyed by the Primordials vessels' defensive fire — but not before a jump capable message torpedo containing dispatches and recordings of the encounter is launched by the Zhodani.

The main Zhodani expedition fleet picks up the torpedo a week later. Its contents cause near panic among the Supreme Commanding Council onboard the Core Expedition fleet — the Primordials fleet was counted in excess of 500 vessels, each with at least 100,000 tons displacement.

Primordials Physiology and Psychology

Physically, the individual Primordial does not appear significant in its native state. Each weighs approximately 100 kilograms and appears to be somewhat similar to a hair-covered Terran Chambered Nautilus with a 6-legged tentacle cluster. (The first humans to board a Sparkler ship described the hull interior to be covered with spiral-shaped fuzzy cinammon rolls.) Primordials reproduce by budding and fission. Immature Primordials look exactly like the kebkh, the minor race native to Deyis II! (See the *Referee's Gaming Kit* folio adventures, and the cover of *World Builder's Handbook.)*

In fact they are one in the same, since Deyis II is the original homeworld of the Primordials. Immature primordials (kebkh) have no psionic potential. For an immature Primordial to mature, the collective psionic mind of the rest of the race is needed to trigger the maturing process. The stranded "primordials" on Deyis II cannot mature since there are no psionic adults to trigger the maturing process!

Maturing Primordials permanently attach themselves to the inner hulls of their ships in a symbiotic relationship — the ship provides nutrients and transportation for the entire colony, the Primordials provide the mental energy required for the jump as well as navigational guidance and, when necessary, the control of defensive weapon fire.

As the Primordials grow, they develop their massive psionic ability. The entire race is one collective mind, linked together telepathically, much as the individual cells of a human brain are linked together electrically. The Primordials (or perhaps The Primordial is more appropriate) are totally aware of the entire existence of the race as well as of the supreme objective of learning new knowledge. The death of one Primordial unit is of no consequence. The destruction of one Primordials ship is equal to a human receiving a minor cut. The collective mind would still exist to rebuild itself even if only one Primordials ship remained.

Mature Primordials have an additional attribute that makes them fearsome. They are shape-shifters. Once they have perceived the physical pattern of a living being, they can alter their shape and coloration to exactly match this being. Their models may be physical beings they see directly, or mental patterns they detect telepathically from other sophonts.

Grandfather and the Ancients knew of the existence of the psionically gifted Primordials and were intently studying them. Grandfather suspected they still existed and roamed the galaxy somewhere toward the center of the galaxy. Thus, he gave the humans with the greatest psionic potential a toy that would peak their interest in exploring toward the galactic core and he periodically leaves his pocket universe to see how the Zhodani are coming in their "quest." Grandfather hopes the Zhodani will someday find the Primordials for him. Grandfather's scheme worked.

The Primordials' Ships

Primordials' starships are massive semi-aware biological constructs. They were adapted from huge underground bulbous lifeforms on Deyis II and were adopted as a means of habitation and protection by the original Primordials. The Primordials' psionic abilities enabled them to levitate these "ships" and use them to explore their world of Deyis II. The Primordials adapted their massive "craft-like" creatures to a vacuum environment. Later with a biologically integrated jump grid, these creatures were engineered into starships. Primordials' starships carry no fuel as such. They absorb and store stellar energy from the primary star they orbit, and use this energy for life support. The collective mind of the on-board Primordials provides the energy, navigation, and jump guidance to their ships. Primordial ships have displaced between 50,000 and one million tons.

The Sparkler Wars

Zhodani Core Expedition quickly turned back from their core exploration and headed for home in all possible haste. Meanwhile, the Primordials tracked the Zhodani psionically, following them home. When the primordial fleet was sighted inside the Zhodani Consulate, they launched a massive strike against the Primordials' fleet. The attack was a disaster. Psionic Zhodani died when the Zho fleet attacked the Primordial fleet, while the proles were stunned, incapable of fighting. Over 90% of the Zhodani fleet was lost. The Zhodani appealed to all nearby starfaring races for help against this common foe, which they believed was intent on wiping out all sentient life.

Other human and alien races, less psionically endowed, were less vulnerable to the collective mind. The Primordials drive toward the center of the Consulate was blunted by a combined counter-attack of Deneb Domain Humans, treaure seeking Vargr from the Democracy of Greats and the Brzeh Council, and Aslan from the Spinward Marches. Paradoxically, those without psionic talents who were in contact with "Sparklers" were able to survive and communicate with them. The collective mind is so powerful that only individuals considered under normal circumstances to have no psionic power were able to receive thoughts from the Sparklers and communicate with them in return.

A number of battles were fought before a non-psionic band of human adventurers were able to board a Sparkler ship and communicate with them. Once the group was able to do this, the fighting ceased. When the humans and others were able

to piece together the reasons for the Race's migration (and that they are the legendary Primordials), to determine that they had no hostile intent (fighting only in self-defense), the Primordials were at last able to learn about the cultures of their own home region of the galaxy. After a few years of roaming through charted space, the "Sparklers" moved on to explore other more fascinating areas of the galaxy.

— Joe D. Fugate Sr.

A READER COMMENTS ON JUMP DRIVE FUEL USAGE

More than a few of our readers didn't agree with our ruling on jump drive fuel usage way back in the Q&A of Travellers' Digest #20. The question basically was, "Concerning jump drives, how much fuel (as a percentage) does a ship use when it jumps a shorter distance than it is capable of travelling."

We approached Marc Miller and asked his current preference in the light of what *Starship Operator's Manual* said about jump drives being mostly a fusion power plant running "full bore" feeding a charge into capacitor crystals. We all (Marc plus the DGP editors) agreed the answer was "most (virtually all) of your fuel load — for technical reasons you can't scrimp on jump drive fuel usage. If you do manage to have any fuel left it won't be enough to charge the crystals for another jump anyway."

A most imaginative counterproposal came to us from Jeffrey Wharton. We offer Jeffrey's remarks here as a suggested optional rationale for those of you who think a ship shouldn't always use up all its fuel when jumping less than their full jump capability:

"The formula I use for jump fuel consumption is:

Fuel = SV x 0.05 x (jump # + 1)

SV — Ship displacement

"This way the x 5% and the +1 together equal the fuel needed for 'warming up' the jump grid — the rest of the fuel is used for the jump itself.

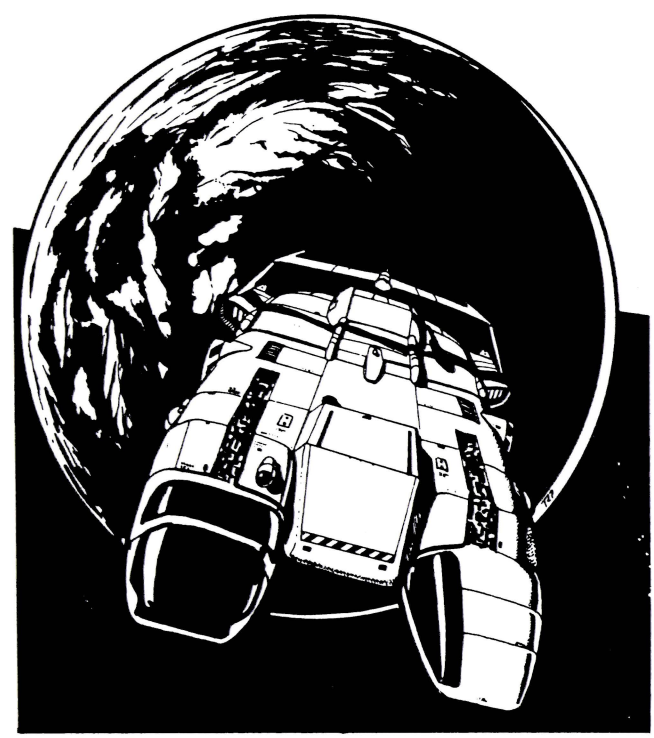
"Longer jumps primarily need more complicated hull grid energizing sequences, with the zuchai crystal network dumping its energy into the grid at a correspondingly faster rate. Because of this situation for longer jumps, the jump drive fusion plant needs to process more fuel even faster than for a lower jump, in order to mirror a 'fast charge rate image' in the zuchai crystals.

"For shorter jumps, the jump drive fusion plant does not need to process as much fuel because less energy is needed to enter a lower jumpspace level. All jumps need a 'warm up' charge from the jump drive fusion plant, regardless of which jump level is being entered.

"Let's look at the *Avery,* a 13,500 kiloliter jump-4 cruiser jumping only 2 parsecs. The *Avery* has a jump drive fuel tankage requirement of 3,375 kiloliters. If the *Avery* jumps 2 parsecs it uses 2,025 kiloliters (13,500 x .05 x 3), leaving 1,350 kiloliters of fuel. This is enough fuel for the *Avery* to jump one additional parsec (13,500 x .05 x 2 = 1,350). But if the *Avery* had jumped three parsecs instead of two, she would have had 675 kl of fuel in her tanks, which is not enough for another jump.

"So, what it boils down to is this: a ship can make multiple jumps without refueling, but it is not as easy as saying a ship capable of jump-4 can make two jump-2s or four jump-1s."

We think Jeffrey has come up with a nifty compromise. •



TOM PETERS

MEGATRAVELLER
Equipment Detail Sheet

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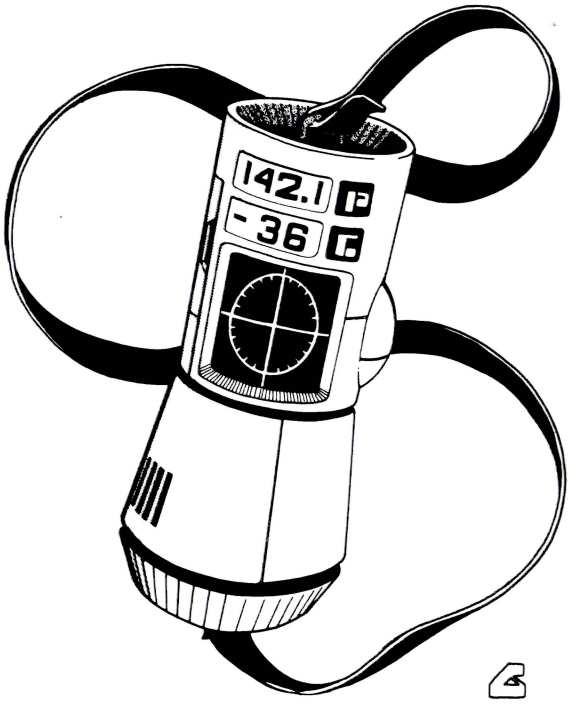
INERTIAL LOCATOR



Tech level 9 version illustrated

EQUIPMENT STATISTICS

	TL	Type	Vol	Wt	Price
O	9	Initial Locator—9	0.5L	1.5kg	Cr1,200
O	10	Initial Locator—10	0.4L	1.25kg	Cr1,000
O	11	Initial Locator—11	0.2L	1.0kg	Cr800
O	12	Initial Locator—12	0.1L	0.5kg	Cr500

SUPPLEMENTAL STATISTICS (Optional)

	TL	Charge Duration	Operating Noise	Power Usage	Comments
O	9	7 days	silent	2W	
O	10	2 wks	silent	1W	
O	11	3 wks	silent	1W	
O	12	4 wks	silent	1W	

USAGE RECORD (Optional)

Each square represents 1 day (24 hours) of usage

O TL9:
O TL10:
O TL11:
O TL12:

CUSTOMIZING NOTES :

DESCRIPTION

The inertial locator provides distance and direction travelled from any preset starting location. The margin of error varies with the tech level: tech level 9+, 10%; tech level 11+, 5%.

An inertial locator is preferred over a compas, since many worlds do not have a magnetic field or if they do have a magnetic field, it is not always reliable. Hence, on most worlds, a compass is useless. The interial locator includes a strap and clip, allowing it to be worn around the neck, over the shoulder, or on a belt.

TASK LIBRARY

To use a intertial locator for a day:
Routine, Recon, Edu, absolute: 1 day (unskilled OK, uncertain)
Referee: On no truth, the locator was preset inproperly, making the locator reading of no value — which means the group is lost. On some truth, if tech 9+, displace the group one square from their intended destination for every 10 travelled; if tech 11+, displace the group one square for every 20 travelled.

To repair a damaged inertial locator:
(varies), Electronics, Edu, [varies]
Referee: Difficulty depends on damage level. Use the standard damage and repair guidelines. Time increments for shop repairs are as follows:

Superficial damage ..... 30 sec.
Minor damage ..... 2 min.
Major damage ..... 1 hr.
Destroyed ..... 2 hrs.

For field repairs, double time and difficulty level.

MEGATRAVELLER
Equipment Detail Sheet

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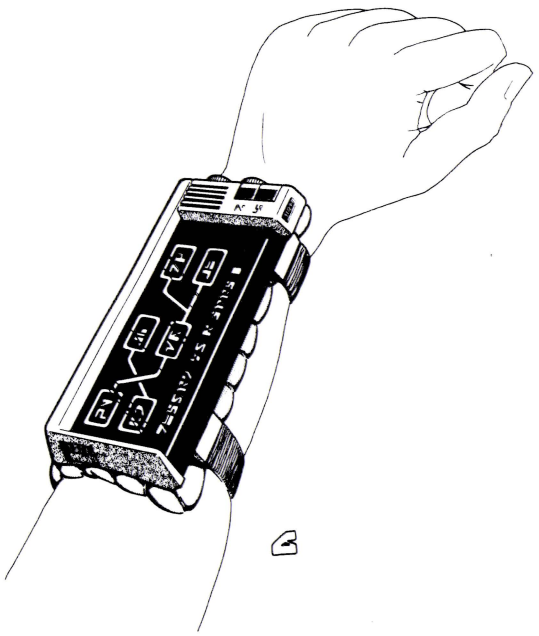
HAND COMPUTER



Tech level 13 version illustrated

EQUIPMENT STATISTICS

	TL	Type	Vol	Wt	Price
O	11	Hand Computer—11	0.2L	0.5kg	Cr1,000
O	13	Hand Computer—13	0.2L	0.5kg	Cr1,000
O	15	Hand Computer—15	0.1L	0.3kg	Cr1,000
O	16	Hand Computer—16	0.1L	0.1kg	Cr1,000

SUPPLEMENTAL STATISTICS (Optional)

	TL	Charge Duration	Operating Noise	Power Usage	Comments
O	11	7 days	soft clicks	1W	Mem 100M words
O	13	4 wks	silent	1W	Mem 500M words
O	15	8 wks	silent	1W	Mem 1,000M words
O	16	12 wks	silent	1W	Mem 5,000M words

USAGE RECORD (Optional)

Each square represents 7 days of usage

O TL11:
O TL13:
O TL15:
O TL16:

CUSTOMIZING NOTES :

DESCRIPTION

The hand computer is a powerful supercomputer that is small enough to be worn on the wrist. The hand computer handles the storage, retrieval, and processing of vast quantities of data (text, graphics, sounds, and images) with remarkable speed and accuracy. The computer also includes a data communications link for hooking into world computer nets available in most urban areas of tech 8+ worlds, or globally from any point on the world's surface on most tech 11+ worlds. The computer net link allows sending and receiving electronic mail, or contacting any other hand computer user for direct voice communication.

Because of its many powerful features, the hand computer is essentially a portable assistant, extending in many ways the capabilities of its user.

TASK LIBRARY

To use a hand computer for data retrieval:
Routine, Computer, Edu, 5 sec (unskilled OK)
Referee: Time duration applies to a keyword lookup. For a general search, use a time increment of 1 hr.

To gain a skill augmentation using a hand computer:
Routine, [skill], Edu, 1 min
Referee: If the character is unskilled in the skill to be augmented, make this task formidable. On success at this task, grant a +1 on the next task using the augmented skill; for exceptional success grant a +2. If successful at an unskilled augmentation, grant a temporary skill-0. The [skill] refers to the skill being augmented — thus the more skilled a character is, the easier it becomes to augment that skill with a hand computer. Use Int if unskilled. Only obviously technical tasks which use Edu and are not uncertain can benefit from hand computer augmentation.

To repair a damaged hand computer:
(varies), Electronics or *Computer+2,* Edu, [varies]
Referee: Difficulty depends on damage level. Use the standard damage and repair guidelines. Time increments for shop repairs are as follows:

Superficial damage	1 min.
Minor damage	10 min.
Major damage	5 hrs.
Destroyed	40 hrs.

For field repairs, double time and difficulty level.

MEGATRAVELLER
Equipment Detail Sheet

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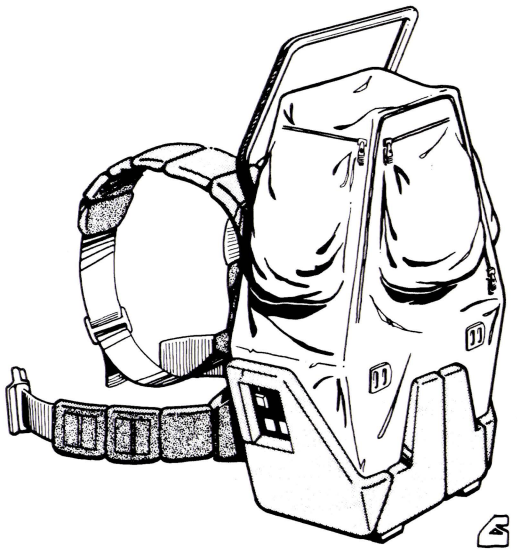
G-PACK



Tech level 12 version illustrated

EQUIPMENT STATISTICS

	TL	Type		Vol	Wt	Price
O	12	G-Pack—12	(vol empty/full)	15/95L	20kg	Cr20,000
O	13	G-Pack—13	(vol empty/full)	15/100L	20kg	Cr50,000
O	14	G-Pack—14	(vol empty/full)	25/110L	40kg	Cr70,000
O	15	G-Pack—15	(vol empty/full)	25/110L	40kg	Cr100,000

SUPPLEMENTAL STATISTICS (Optional)

	TL	Charge Duration	Operating Noise	Power Usage	Comments
O	12	8 hrs	silent	1 kw	80L, thrust 100kg
O	13	24 hrs	silent	1 kw	85L, thrust 100kg
O	14	2 days	silent	1 kw	90L, thrust 140kg
O	15	4 days	silent	1 kw	95L, thrust 140kg

USAGE RECORD (Optional)

Each square represents 1 day (24 hours) of usage

O TL12: ☒
O TL13: □
O TL14: □□
O TL15: □□□□

CUSTOMIZING NOTES :

DESCRIPTION

The g-pack allows an individual to easily carry 80kg of hardware (grav module thrust minus the empty weight of the pack) with no regard to a character's strength limitations and at little encumbrance. The integral grav module allows the backpack and its contents to have no effective weight.

However, the weightless pack and its contents still have inertia, which can cause problems for those who are not careful. Because of the pack's limited operating duration, it is not suitable for extended journeys on foot unless considerable pack volume is devoted to extra batteries.

TASK LIBRARY

To use a for 8 hours without incident:
Routine, Dex, Edu, absolute: 8 hours (fateful)
Referee: While the character is using a g-pack, apply a -1 to his dexterity because of the slight encumbrance caused by the ever-present inertia.

To repair a damaged g-pack:
(varies), Gravitics, Edu, [varies]
Referee: Difficulty depends on damage level. Use the standard damage and repair guidelines. Time increments for shop repairs are as follows:

Superficial damage .....30 sec.
Minor damage.....5 min.
Major damage .....2 hrs.
Destroyed .....10 hrs.

For field repairs, double time and difficulty level.

BIRTH OF A NEW GAME

THE STORY BEHIND AI™

As most of you have noticed by now, DGP is working on a new roleplaying game, AI™ (A.I. stands for **A**rtificial **I**ntelligence). To date, our entire effort has been focused on supporting Traveller and why not, since we're avid fans of the game — we started as plain old gamers just like you. But now we're talking about this new game, AI™.

How did AI get its start? Why did we feel we needed to end Traveller support and go do our own game? What makes AI any different from the dozens of other roleplaying games already on the market? Why should a Traveller gamer bother taking a look at AI?

Let's delve into the answers to these questions by telling you the story of how and why AI came to be.

WHY OUR OWN GAME?

Even though we'd love to support Traveller for as long as the game lasts, our staff meetings often saw troubling business questions raised time and again: "As a GDW licensee, we don't own this game we are publishing products for. How do we protect ourselves in case GDW decides to change things on us? What if we disagree with their direction? What if they change overnight? Shouldn't we have more control, so we can better plan a secure future for DGP?"

Plus, as a licensee, many saw us as an unproven, second-rate company, an also-ran if you will. Distributors and retailers don't take us as seriously as a "real" gaming company (many of you know what we mean — you know how hard it is to get your local store to consistently stock our products). "It doesn't take a lot to support *somebody else's* game," they would say, "but do you have the 'right stuff' to be able to design *your own* game?"

The next step is where things get tough. "If we did do our own game, what would it be about?"

THE BEGINNING OF AN IDEA

One day, we were discussing what we liked most about Traveller. Everybody rated the Ancients very high, and finding their techno-gadgets was always lots of fun. Robots added a lot to a campaign, and we know our *Book 8: Robots* that GDW published had sold quite well. Weird aliens, odd creatures, and unusual environments added a lot to adventures, too.

One thing we observed about Traveller's beginnings was rather interesting. Traveller seems to focus on this huge starmap, kind of a "board gamer" mentality. It's an interesting thing we hadn't noticed before, but the observation makes sense, since GDW was first a board game company before it was a roleplaying game company. And the more we thought about it, this massive starmap outlook was backwards to how roleplaying games ought to be designed. The key element of a roleplaying game is not the

"map" but the *character.* What if we built a roleplaying game from the character out, instead of from the universe in? Design a game that had neat, fun-to-play character-centered things *first and foremost.*

Then we asked ourselves another difficult question about the RPG business. "Why is the fantasy RPG market so much bigger than the science-fiction (SF) game market?" Lots of discussion ensued. We concluded SF gamers prefer gadgets to characters, to sum up the most important reason. So it was all the more certain: if we were to design a game with broader appeal, we needed to focus on *characters* first.

From all this discussion, our first conceptual breakthrough came: "What if we design an SF game that fantasy gamers would like?" Think — how could we do that? What is the fantasy gamer's biggest beef with SF games? "They're too technical," we decided. "So," we reasoned, "why don't we make the science aspect so it's not important to playing an adventure — in fact being dumb about the science is more common than the reverse?"

Here's an idea! We're still died-in-the-wool SF fans at heart, so why not make an SF game where the technology is so advanced it seems like magic! That would make every adventure feel like the best of the Traveller adventures we so enjoyed — those with the Ancients. And if the technology was so magical, you could focus on its effects, and not get hung up on the physics involved. Fantasy gamers would like that better.

"This could almost be a new RPG genre," we thought. What do we call it? *Technofantasy!* Okay, good. But how do we differentiate the idea from the many multi-genre games already out there? Slapping fantasy and SF into a heterogeneous mish-mash is a bit of a cop-out, we felt. What about a seamless integration of magic and SF — in effect a hard science-fiction game that's loaded with seeming magic — now that's the *classy* way to mix science fiction and magic. So our slogan was born: "Not technology and magic, but technology *as* magic."

WHAT DO WE CALL IT?

In our many discussions about different Traveller products we wanted to do, we had always wanted to do the ultimate robot book — one that really explored artificially intelligent robots as player characters (PCs). Since our new game's philosophy was ultra-high tech, it could be a better vehicle for exploring widespread artificial intelligence than Traveller ever could be. Many of the devices the PCs used would likely be intelligent.

Rob had had a referee friend whose adventures he always enjoyed a lot, and this referee would stick in devices that had intelligence, and he would play them as non-player characters.

"What a *great* idea!" we thought. Imagine a party whose devices might disagree with them, or might teach them how they could be used? Boy what a kick — playing the party's hardware as NPCs. That's one way to make an SF game character centered — much of the hardware items are characters, too! We could have our cake and eat it too — fancy tech gadgets to make the SF gamers happy, but the stuff plays as characters, which helps make the fantasy gamers happy.

After several weeks of debate, we finally settled on a name for our new brainchild: AI (pronounced "aye-eye"). Many of the DGP staffers have their roots in the computer business, and A.I. is a term that refers to the leading edge of computer and robotics research today. So the name seemed like a natural to many of the staff for our new game, since smart robots and devices would play a key role. Others of the staff felt the name wouldn't mean much to fantasy gamers — which is perhaps true — but more and more of the population at large are becoming computer literate, and the name does do a fair job of describing a significant aspect of the game's appeal. It also conjures up the image of robots, which is appealing to many gamers, and that couldn't hurt. So the name stuck.

BUT WHAT'S THE PLOT?

Okay, we had the kernel of a unique gaming environment here, but what do characters *do* in this game? What are the goals to be had? Where is the conflict? To answer these questions, we needed a plot line for our background.

One thing we wanted to avoid with any game we designed was the clichés. Fresh and unique was our goal. Early on, we decided to explore the possibility of a game background that didn't have faster-than-light travel (FTL, that is, jumpspace or hyperspace), but instead relied only on sublight travel.

Things came together quickly as we ran with this idea. Several centuries from now, we reasoned, artificially intelligent sublight star probes are sent to the nearby stars to explore and send back what they find. It could take even the fastest sublight probe several centuries to reach Alpha Centuri. What if the probes get to their destination, radio back to earth, and earth doesn't answer? Since these probes are artificially intelligent, many of them would probably decide to come back home with the results of their explorations instead.

Now what if the earth they found was barbaric and fallen, but it still had artifactual remnants of the once high technology that existed? To the population, these artifacts would seem to be magical in their powers! And the AI probes would seem to be gods with all kinds of fantastic powers.

So now we had a plot, and a mystery to boot. What about the conflict? Well, if the AI probes are artificially intelligent, they can think, which means they are capable of differing opinions on how to rebuild the now fallen earth. The probes could disagree! So there is our conflict.

After much discussion, we decided to set the game about 1500 years from now. The first probe returned about 500 years ago, and the most recent probe returned about 300 years ago. Not all probes, however, have returned (it's always nice to leave options). The probes, we reasoned, would return, land on the earth, and set about building a kingdom — trying to find out what went wrong and how to rebuild things again.

Most of the probes would build massive molecular level simulations of the earth they knew and use present data in an attempt to discover what went wrong. In other words, these probes would become repositories of great knowledge and information. This also means most would become so massive they would be immobile, relying instead on player characters to do their bidding and to act as their remote eyes, ears, hands, and feet. We called the immobile version of the AI probes *citadels.* Most kingdoms in AI's time are built around a citadel.

Other questions now came to mind. In order to understand what kind of artifacts remained from the Pinnacle Times (what we chose to call the "good ol' days of widespread high technology), what other kinds of fantastic technology was behind all this magic?

BEHIND THE MAGIC

In order to make technology truly magical, we needed to push scientific advancement to its absolute limit. One way we felt this could be done was with nanotechnology. K. Eric Drexler's two books *Engines of Creation* and *Unbounding the Future* gave us a lot of ideas on the hows and whats of nanotechnology. Reading these two books and discussing them lead to many fantastic technologies that would be quite magical indeed.

Nanotechnology, for those of you who might not know what that is, involves creating little microscopic machines to build things molecule by molecule. What this kind of technology leads to is nothing short of fantastic. Imagine planting a seed in a raw materials slurry — and having some device grow right before your eyes in a day's time. The seed actually contains some basic "startup" nanotech machines, plus a program on how to build a horde of more specialized nano machines and a programmed

blueprint for some device the entire nannee army is to construct. This all takes place at the molecular level, so to the observer, the thing just magically grows from the raw materials "soil" you planted the nannee seed in.

Imagine growing clothes, houses, tools — anything you need — if you have the proper raw materials. Imagine the tremendous things nanneez could do for machine maintenance: devices that heal themselves if damaged. And imagine the implications for us biological lifeforms — and army of nanneez in our system constantly looking for damage and repairing the damage when they find it (keeper nanneez, we call them). Or even more dramatic, what about nanneez programmed to do genetic manipulation of a biological lifeform (more on this later).

Imagine the potential for destruction! Nannee machines could tear molecules apart as well as put them together. Better yet, the nanneez could record the composition of the thing they are tearing apart, and later you can make copies — limited only by your supply of the proper molecules as raw material. Drexler calls such nanneez *disassemblers.* The most insidious use of disassemblers would be to create nanneez that disassemble their target as rapidly as possible — a "disintegration microbe" if you will. Things could get pretty nasty.

Consider a possible result of all this nannee microbe warfare. You send in the disassemblers to take select items in your enemy's army apart, so you can record their function and develop good countermeasures before you invade in force. But his army's units all have counter nanneez who trigger a rapid disassembly of themselves if they are ever invaded by disassembler nanneez they can't counter. So you don't learn a thing, you lose your disassembler nanneez, and you give away which of his units worry you the most.

And there are other limits. For example, nanneez cannot disassemble something too fast or the energy released by breaking all those molecular bonds will destroy the disassemblers. We've limited the maximum disassembly rate in AI™ to about a minute. What way to go — to watch yourself get disassembled over the period of about a minute!

IT'S ALL IN YOUR GENES

To make things even more fun, we figure all this nanotechnology led to extensive genetic engineering and reengineering of all kinds of lifeforms on earth, including humans. Animals were uplifted to intelligence. In fact, such genetic manipulations became so common, it entered the vocabulary. In AI™ all lifeforms are called *Gens.*

The result is we have three distinct races in AI: hugens, angens, and kogens. Hugens are the humans — genetically altered or otherwise. Angens are the uplifted animals. And kogens are a new race re-introduced into the world by the returning AI probes — artificially intelligent robots. Children created after their own kind, if you will.

The end result is an earth that's like a thousand alien worlds — all kinds of exotic and weird lifeforms, diseases, and artifacts out there to discover and meet. There are lost ruins from the Pinnacle Times yet to be found. There are uncharted wildernesses to cross and conquer.

There's conflict and war between some of the citadels using unbelievably strange and fantastic weapons. Swords that will cut through most anything and that teach you how to use themselves properly. Spears you throw that collect information about their target and then come back to you and tell you what they found. Exotic weapons that you grow from a seed given to you by the citadel. The weapon teaches you how it is to be used, then later disassembles itself before you (or your enemy) can learn the secrets of how it works. Or destroy your enemy's army and it grows back in a couple of days, ready to fight again.

Or design and grow some re-engineered lifeform. Or backup your kogen character into a "lifeboat" and if he accidentally gets disassembled by a nasty enemy, just download your character (albeit minus his most recently acquired experiences and abilities) into some new body and off you go adventuring again. The list of the unique and fresh possibilities of AI™ goes on.

TECHNOFANTASY ADVENTURING

We've taken all this background and are currently trying to put it into a slick, playable game system. Character creation is a key element of a character-centered roleplaying game like AI™. The character creation system is rich and flexible. But for those of you who don't want to spend hours lovingly detailing a character, there is a quick and dirty template system too.

From what we've learned from the flaws of the Traveller task system we've created an improved, streamlined new task system for AI™. And of course, AI allows characters to grow and improve as they adventure.

Our feedback over the years about the nugget format we devised for Traveller has been helpful. We designed the nugget format to encourage adventures to be *played* and not just read. But fantasy gamers, we've found, often consider science fiction games are too tightly choreographed — and the "worst" example of this is DGP's nugget format, complete with flowcharts, no less!

Fantasy adventures tend to be rich in characterization and details, and therefore their adventures are presented as intricately detailed settings reeking with mood and sensation. This means fantasy adventures tend to be presented in a free-form format, describing in lavish detail the various settings. Then it's up to the gamemaster (GM) to present the settings and allow the characters to just explore. Any GM worth his salt can improvise on the PCs' actions if he knows the settings in great detail.

So the nugget format is great for getting a new adventure, sitting down, and starting play *immediately.* (I've seen this actually done at GENCON with our Traveller adventure we presented there two years ago.) The *fast start* is the hallmark of the nugget format.

By way of contrast, presenting an adventure with meticulously detailed (that is, novel style) descriptions of the setting gives players a richer, more satisfying adventure experience if the GM is any good. But the GM has to study the adventure for several days (maybe even weeks) in order to learn and visualize this imaginary setting. *Rich detail* is the hallmark of the setting/story format for presenting an adventure.

In considering this feedback, we have decided the *ideal* adventure format (and one we are promoting for AI) is a series of sample nuggets laying out a primary plot or two, coupled with lavish setting essay stories. This increases the post-adventure utility of the adventure, since the setting information is reusable background material — available for any adventure plot you care to set against that background.

So watch for AI™ soon in your stores. We've designed it to be a blast to play — in many ways we like it better than Traveller. How could we ever say a thing like that, you ask? We've taken everything we've learned from the mistakes made with with Traveller (both our own and GDW's) and thrown in lots of fun background that goes beyond anything we could *ever* do with Traveller. We think you'll find AI™ to be the best DGP product yet.•

Special Offer: *We're offering a special advance reservation deal for Traveller players who want a copy of AI™ — send us $15 (or call us and use your credit card) and we'll reserve you a special autographed copy of AI™ so that when it comes out you'll automatically get it shipped to you postage paid. This special deal is for Traveller players only and it represents a 40% savings off the full game price of $25 (or even more if you consider the free postage too). This deal is only good as an advance reservation for Traveller gamers and will expire once the game is released.*

THROUGH THE YEARS

A POTPOURRI OF UNPUBLISHED MEMOS FROM THE DGP ARCHIVES

Now that DGP is discontinuing Traveller support (see this issue's Helm Report for details), I (Joe Fugate) have gone through many of the DGP's archives and have collected some of the more interesting past letters and memos here. There are some neat Traveller ideas in here, plus some unpublished secrets. Much of this material never saw its way into print because it was just our inside letters and memos to each other ot to select gamers.

Rather than add a lot of filler, I'm just going to print these documents with minimal explanation. This way, you get to visit us and see what makes us tick — you get to meet the real us. After reading these excerpts, you can consider yourself a real insider, since you've now been privy to many inside conversations.

DGP'S PHILOSOPHY

We would sometimes get on each other's nerves (like all situations involving more than one person), and so I'd sometimes write "pep talks" to the staff in the form of letters. The letters might outline my own concerns and ask if I was coming across right, and they often included some criticism aimed at defusing frustrations I was having with other staff members. Here are bits from one letter that I feel best described the DGP philosophy...

To the Staff—

DGP has built it's reputation on a quality *team* effort. That means it is our job to patiently listen to each other's ideas, and to not put any of our own ideas ahead of any other team member's ideas. Put another way, no other team member's ideas are to be viewed as lesser than any one else's.

Everytime we redo something it is better the second time around. *So what* if we tell you something you write or an idea you have is dumb? You all have told me some of my ideas are dumb — and rightly so. I may be disappointed, but I try to look at the criticism honestly, and ask myself "well, if they think it's dumb, maybe they have something there..."

Don't try to keep score, or make the rest of the group feel that if we throw out your idea, then we've just thrown you out too. Not true in the least! True teamwork, in my opinion, means you care more that the team goes with the *best* idea rather than simply *your* idea. And even if the team does go with your idea — it's not *your* idea, it is *our* idea.

DGP Writing and Art Is "Work for Hire"

DGP writing and art is work for hire. If someone hires you to do a certain job (like fixing their car, say), and you don't do the job the way your customer wants you to, you would expect the customer to have the right to ask you to redo it the way they wanted it done.

So it is with the writing or art we have you do. I publish something if I think it is what I want and the readers will like. I am under no obligation to publish something you do if it is not what I want. As publisher, that is my right, since I am risking my money. You won't always agree with me, which is fine, but that is to be expected.

However, since I am publishing Traveller game material that you are doing on hire for me, then if I ask you to change your writing or art to fit my desires, I should not be facing an uphill battle all the way. I don't mind some disagreement, but once you agree to make the changes, I expect you to honor my wishes. If you *do not* make the changes the group recommends, then I will either: make the changes myself, or (if you put up a fuss) I will reject the piece and avoid using your work again very soon. There are too many writers and artists out there who will do what I ask.

I need not put myself into a constant fight to get what I think the readers want. Because our publishing needs are so specific, you must put up with this sort of arrangement. I deal with GDW this way — Marc gets writing from me that is what he wants. If he doesn't like one of my ideas, then I pull it, rework it, or whatever, and that's that. No hard feelings. No big arguments. He's my customer and "the customer's always right", as they say.

Rework Is the DGP secret

We review and critique each other's work constantly. One should never expect a piece to be right the first time. One shouldn't be surprised or angry if the rest of the group sends a piece back for rework with all our comments. And I expect you to implement most of those comments too. I *know* it is more work. But it makes it better, too. Shouldn't you *relish* the opportunity to improve your work, and to learn from others' observations? Only makes sense to me.

Don't we all like to give others *our* feedback, *our* ideas on how they can improve *their* work? Have we ever thought that the other person has to be willing to heed what we say, and that sometimes we will be in the position of being the one who should heed? In other words, wee need to take criticism as well as dish it out. Do we *enjoy* others getting mad the moment we start to offer criticism, or do we appreciate an honest and quiet listener who will hear us out?

For example, I have the highest regard for Tom Peter's playtest comments, and I think his suggestions should be acted upon to the letter at least 90% of the time. The old timer in SOPM was Tom's idea. Tom has an acute sense of what is *fun* in the game. Tom has repeatedly demonstrated to me that he understands the dynamics of play better than any of us, myself included. What makes a good yarn is seldom what makes for fun play. Listen to Tom. Covet his suggestions. Learn from him. Learn to know your weaknesses and to openly acknowledge you need to get help with that area, and to appreciate that help when it comes.

DGP is quality, not quantity

Our sole goal in life should not be to fill pages, nor should we panic if they are not yet filled. Rob's efforts as art director and kibitzer at large for DGP's general direction both demonstrated to me he has the new vision for what the magazine ought to become as the Journal, and I know he would ride herd on us all with those deadlines. The vision I was looking for is the "DGP quality" angle — so I have named Rob editor of the new MegaTraveller Journal.

We want to avoid a formulaic approach to things, such makes the work look less creative. I like Rob's description of how things that are the most creative and clever work: "they walk a fine line between standardization and chaos." So if anyone suggests altering the "standardization/chaos" ratio don't get upset. We don't just have a series of "slots" to fill — we don't just fill the slots have a product. That is one way to do a magazine, especially a potpourri magazine like Challenge. But that's not what I want the Journal to be.

Dare to question your prior ideas of how things are done, or how they are best done. But be willing to admit you may not have all the answers.

—Joe

SPEAKING OF TOM PETERS

The above letter mentioned Tom Peters. Well, here is an unusual adventure idea Tom sent in many moons ago. Maybe some of you can use it...

There are rumors of a very limited edition book, published by a noble house in the 800s, that recounts the visions of a short-lived member of the household. The entries are disturbingly accurate about the details of the Rebellion. This book — over 2000 pages long — is mostly *rumored* to exist through 2nd and 3rd hand sources. Obviously, if true, the text could be extremely useful to a faction — or even to a group of individuals trying to navigate through these troubled times.

It was published by only one printing house, on the noble's homeworld, and copies have found their way into the collections of apocalyptic tales, occult, and noble historical collections in the region. A few have even gotten into public library collections in various obscure backwaters of the area (which may have been major repositories of knowledge at the time the book was written).

Numerous points of conflict/adventure can be milked from this premise. First of all, trying to find the thing. Second, there are others also trying to find it, and these can range from radicals wishing to rid the world of psionically-produced artifacts to others wishing to use the book for personal gain. Also dealing with some of the weird cases which may want the thing (psionic mystics, reverential royal artifact collectors, the librarian from hell, etc.) and those who already *have* a copy and wish to destroy all the others for their own personal gain.

It's not recommended that such a book ever really existed, though satisfying and lucrative awards should be arranged for a creative search.

ROB'S REBELLION

The DGP pep talk letter above also mentioned Rob Caswell. Back about the time Rob took over as editor of the new MegaTraveller Journal, he put together a proposed schedule for "making things happen" in the Rebellion. Not much came of the ideas, since shortly thereafter we decided GDW should handle the Rebellion and our new Journal should focus on the Domain of Deneb. Still, Rob's proposal makes for some fun reading...

Rebellion Turning Points Proposal

QUARTER 1:

-First hints of the Margaret/Dulinor alliance put in place (Black Duke).

-Solomani launch new, increased assault on the Dabei region (TNS).

QUARTER 2:

-Margaret/Dulinor alliance occurs (Knightfall).

-Dabei region falls under Solomani control (TNS, Alien Book 2, or Digest MegaTraveller adventure).

QUARTER 3:

-Zhodani War with "baddies from the core" begins (Digest Feature Adventure).

-Solomani sign treaty with Dulinor/Margaret, ceasing hostilities (TNS).

QUARTER 4:

-The ultimate nature of The Real Strephon revealed. Results in either a downfall of his realm or an alliance with one of the other factions (Digest Adventure).

QUARTER 5:

-Antares supernova. Brzk killed, Antares faction crumbles in panic (Digest Adventure).

QUARTER 6:

-Beginning of specialized sector coverage (DGP product).

Y'know, I've swayed back and forth on the supernova idea. I get caught between how much this event would ultimately alter the "geography" of the Imperium and surrounds and the elegance and probability of the situation — not to mention how disasters on this scale tend to bring people together (thus aiding the ultimate goal of getting the rebellion to a "peaceful" plateau).

Consider: if the supernova had occurred at Traveller's beginning (1105), by now (1120) the Imperium would be short 23 systems. That means that if we have this event occur in '92 and keep the realtime clock running, in ten years' time (that's 2002...or 1132 Imperial), we'd only be down about 14 systems. That's enough to make it interesting, but not enough to make any significant dent in the Imperium (or the game's) structure.

If the ultimate extent of the event is too much for you...weeeellllll, this IS a science fiction game. Perhaps Grandfather, being the omniscient guy he is, knew of this event and, in order to save some Droyne worlds from being destroyed in the blast, channelled a majority of the radiative energy into the rift (which starts at Antares). Thus the penetration into civilized space is limited... more limited than scientists predicted, thus leading to an adventure?

Perhaps Grandfather builds some manner of device in the rift to harness this redirected energy?

End of idea session. Lemme know what you think.

—Rob

JOE'S TASK

Meanwhile, I had kept fiddling with the task system. Since I love to tinker with rules, polishing them and making them ever more playable, naturally I kept playing with our task system. I wrote many of my thoughts down for a gamer who was going to do a MegaTraveller miniatures rules system (which GDW later decided not to pursue). In any event, perhaps some of you will find my notes on the task system helpful...

Steven:

Here is a probability study of task results. Understanding the

implications of these charts is essential to designing good tasks for a revised Striker game system.

Simple Task...

	Chance of roll 2 below (ex fail)	Chance of roll 1 below (fail)	Chance of exact roll (marginal)	Chance of roll 1 above (success)	Chance of roll 2 above (ex success)
DM +0	-	-	6%	8%	83%
DM +1	-	-	-	6%	92%
DM +2	-	-	-	-	97%
DM +3	-	-	-	-	100%

Notes: The only way failure can occur on a simple task is through a fumble result.

Routine Task...

	Chance of roll 2 below (ex fail)	Chance of roll 1 below (fail)	Chance of exact roll (marginal)	Chance of roll 1 above (success)	Chance of roll 2 above (ex success)
DM +0	28%	14%	17%	14%	28%
DM +1	17%	11%	14%	17%	42%
DM +2	8%	8%	11%	14%	58%
DM +3	-	6%	8%	11%	72%
DM +4	-	-	6%	8%	83%
DM +5	-	-	-	6%	92%
DM +6	-	-	-	-	97%
DM +7	-	-	-	-	100%

Difficult Task...

	Chance of roll 2 below (ex fail)	Chance of roll 1 below (fail)	Chance of exact roll (marginal)	Chance of roll 1 above (success)	Chance of roll 2 above (ex success)
DM +0	83%	8%	6%	3%	-
DM +1	72%	11%	8%	6%	3%
DM +2	58%	14%	11%	8%	8%
DM +3	42%	17%	14%	11%	17%
DM +4	28%	14%	17%	14%	28%
DM +5	17%	11%	14%	17%	42%
DM +6	8%	8%	11%	14%	58%
DM +7	-	6%	8%	11%	72%
DM +8	-	-	6%	8%	83%

Formidable Task...

	Chance of roll 2 below (ex fail)	Chance of roll 1 below (fail)	Chance of exact roll (marginal)	Chance of roll 1 above (success)	Chance of roll 2 above (ex success)
DM +0	100%	-	-	-	-
DM +1	100%	-	-	-	-
DM +2	97%	3%	-	-	-
DM +3	92%	6%	3%	-	-
DM +4	83%	8%	6%	3%	-
DM +5	72%	11%	8%	6%	3%
DM +6	58%	14%	11%	8%	8%
DM +7	42%	17%	14%	11%	17%
DM +8	28%	14%	17%	14%	28%

Impossible Task...

	Chance of roll 2 below (ex fail)	Chance of roll 1 below (fail)	Chance of exact roll (marginal)	Chance of roll 1 above (success)	Chance of roll 2 above (ex success)
DM +0	100%	-	-	-	-
DM +1	100%	-	-	-	-
DM +2	100%	-	-	-	-
DM +3	100%	-	-	-	-
DM +4	100%	-	-	-	-
DM +5	100%	-	-	-	-
DM +6	97%	3%	-	-	-
DM +7	92%	6%	3%	-	-
DM +8	83%	8%	6%	3%	-

While I was compiling the *Referee's Manual* for MegaTraveller, I did the above probability study in order to arrive at the "exceptional success/failure" method. I toyed with 4 over/under first, but the study pointed out the effects I was after were not attainable at 4 over/under. Even though it's not completely intuitive, it turns out the +2 for exceptional success and the -2 for exceptional failure is statistically the exact effect I was after.

Most combat tasks should be confrontation tasks, I believe. Both the attacker and the defender contribute DMs to a single roll. Two separate rolls (one for the attacker and one for the defender) only slow down play — not a good idea in today's "never enough time to game" market.

The assumption I made with a basic task is that most gamers would likely have a +4 DM on a task. The routine task should easily succeed with a DM of +4, which it does (it effectively becomes equal to a simple task with no DMs). In fact, since the task difficulty levels increase by 4, a +4 DM on any task makes that task equivalent to the next lower difficulty level without DMs.

Now, the "most will have a +4 DM" concept is no longer true on a confrontation task. I would say the proper DM to assume on a confrontation task is that "most will have a +0 DM", because the attacker and defender DMs will cancel each other out. This means that a referee used to non-confrontation tasks will tend to set difficulty levels too high on confrontation tasks.

This "too difficult" problem on a confrontation task leads to another "non-intuitive" concept, but one which may help in setting confrontation task difficulty levels more consistently: Express them with an automatic +4 DM (which actually makes them one difficulty level lower).

Thus:

"Normal" Task	Confrontation Task
Simple	Routine,+4
Routine	Difficult,+4
Difficult	Formidable,+4
Formidable	Impossible,+4

The "fixed modifier" idea also leads to a new way to "fine tune" tasks. For instance, if you would like a difficulty level harder than ROUTINE, but easier than DIFFICULT, then use a fixed modifier like so:

To hit the grav tank:
Difficult,+2, Gunnery

The gamer needs 9+ to succeed on this task.

My own feelings are that a +2 fixed modifier is okay from time to time, but +1 o r +3 is so close to the regular difficulties that the extra complication just isn't worth it. Just go with the regular task difficulty in these cases. It's simpler.

A prime motivation behind the task system was to eliminate rolls like the following:

Need 8+ to hit the grav tank.
DMs:
If excellent visibility, +1
If poor visibility, -1
If night, -4
If raining, -2
If snowing, -3
If foggy, -4
If using electronic sights, +2
If using maser sights, +3
If target moving, -2
If attacker moving, -2
If light vegetation, -1
If dense vegetation, -2

Yuk! People have tried to do this with the task system like this:

To hit the grav tank:
Routine, gunnery (Confrontation)
Referee: Also apply the following DMs to this task:
If normal visibility, -1
If poor visibility, -2
If night, -5

If raining, -3
If snowing, -4
If foggy, -5
If using electronic sights, +1
If using maser sights, +2
If target moving, -2
If attacker moving, -2
If light vegetation, -1
If dense vegetation, -2

No, no, no! The problem is either: you are doing too much with one task, or you need to alter difficulty levels in place of throwing in a bunch of DMs. You should limit yourself to two DM items max per offender or defender. For example, I would rewrite the above task as follows:

To hit the grav tank:
(varies), off=gunnery, sensor DM; def=terrain, def DM
(confrontation)
If defender stationary: Difficult,+4
If attacker or defender moving: Difficult,+2
If both moving: Difficult,+0
Referee: Increase this task by one difficulty level if
...it is night
...it is bad weather (e.g., raining, snowing, or foggy)
These increases are cumulative.

See how much simpler this is? The difficulty increase for night and/or bad weather is intuitive enough I could almost guess how to do it. And with the technique of "fine-tuning" difficulty levels, the moving/not moving problem is nearly intuitive too. However, a variable difficulty task is more complicated than a task with only one difficulty, so use the variable difficulty task sparingly. If possible, refer the gamer to a simple chart with the difficulty changes noted on the chart (like the MegaTraveller direct fire difficulty tables on page 72 of the Players' Manual). Ideally, keep the changes consistent from column to column so the chart is easy to commit to memory.

Also notice: anything followed by the word "DM" is precomputed before the scenario starts (like sensor DM and def DM). Have the gamers precompute everything they can. It makes life a lot simpler and the session will go a lot faster.

The terrain modifier should come from the chart or playing table. The fact that it is listed in the task is a good reminder that it needs to be included. And of course, the gunnery "skill" would be some sort of value that the stand/vehicle had to represent it's relative experience/skill. If miniatures rules are to be an adjunct to roleplaying like *Striker* is, then you need to incorporate some effects of skill as an integral part of the game, rather than as a tack-on in the appendix.

There is another DM technique that is handy: the roving DM. This works well for things like tactics skill. The gamers get a pool of points from which to draw and they can use it as special DMs to help on any task they chose. You can alter the roving DM technique to get certain effects by:

- making the roving DM a resource that doesn't renew each turn, so when it's gone it's gone

- requiring certain qualifications of a unit before the roving DM can be used

Also note the time increment is missing from all the task examples I've given. I'd recommend that for rules where turns are discrete time segments that you ignore the time increment entirely. Just tell the gamer in the front of the rules you are ignoring the time increment because it isn't needed in rules where each turn represents a specific time. The time increment is meant more for use during a roleplaying session where the flow of time is dynamic instead of fixed.

A neat use of morale might be to use it in place of determination. In other words, morale could be the DM to use on the standard determination task. The idea here is determination applies to an individual, but morale applies to a group.

Thus a team might try a cautious attempt at a task if their morale is high enough. A team might get to retry a failed task next turn if, by virtue of their morale, they can stay determined.

Remember, destroyed mishaps are only possible on hazardous tasks.

Uncertain tasks for sensor sweeps work well only if the referee knows what is out there already. Uncertain tasks can get confusing if the referee uses them with out knowing what is there. In other words, the referee is attempting to use an uncertain task to tell when to put something out there for the players to spot. Wrong. The referee needs to have some idea what is really out there first, then have the players roll the uncertain task to see if they can spot it/them with their sensors.

The corollary to this is players cannot use an uncertain task on their own (with out a referee) to see if they find something. An uncertain task assumes two individuals are rolling — one who knows the true answer and one who doesn't. The results of the combined task roll tells the one who knows the true answer how much to reveal, and the roll only gives the uninformed person an inkling as to how true or false the other person's answer is.

In a "referee-less" setting as may exist in a Striker game, the obvious first solution with uncertain tasks would be for one side to act as temporary "referee" for the other side while rolling the task. Unfortunately, this means the enemy now knows how much you know — in fact they know more about what you know than you do — they know whether you know if it's true!

A way to maintain the uncertainty on both sides is for the side with the information to make four cards: two labeled "true" on the back and two labeled "false" on the back. On one true card put a true answer about the question being asked and the other put a "some truth" answer. On one false card put a false answer to the question and on the other card put a "some truth" answer. Place the four cards face down somewhere nearby. An outside observer should be able to look at the content of these cards and not be able to tell for certain which contain the "some truth" answers.

Next, have the side seeking the information roll the uncertain task. If they succeed, they take the two true cards, letting them figure out which is the truth. If they fail, they get the false cards, again letting them figure out which one has the best information.

ROB'S REVELATION

Many gamers wrote us with comments after we revealed the long-time great Traveller secret: that the Aslan are a minor race. Most people loved us letting the cat out of the bag (pun intended) — a few very vocal gamers were devastated, claiming we had ruined the Aslan race! Here are some comments Rob Caswell wrote up as a kind of Q&A expressing his view at the time on the revelation...

Q. Rob, when did you first hear about the Aslan secret and what was your reaction?

A. I first heard about the Aslan's secret sometime back in late '86. Joe and I were engaged in one of our lengthy examinations of Traveller minutia. We must have stumbled into an Aslan topic, since Joe said something like, "Y'wanna know a secret?" Not being one to refuse the offer of forbidden knowledge, I invited Joe to clobber me with the info.

"The Aslan are really a minor race", he said. "Oh yeah?", I replied, somewhat surprised. "How do you figure that?" Joe went on to explain the fateful first contact between Solomani Traders and the Aslan. Looking at the facts, it seemed to make sense (see GDW's *Alien Module #1*, pg. 3-paragraph 8) — especially considering Kusyu's grossly off-center location in the *contemporary* Hierate.

It was a fun nugget of information to bounce around in my mind — an interesting twist on what was presumed to be accurate, factual knowledge. Shortly thereafter, it got filed away in my head till late '88, when Joe said, "Guess what we're gonna do in issue 17?"

Knowing how long the Aslan secret had been around, I was glad that we finally found the right vehicle to showcase it. Even better was the fact that William H.Keith, Jr. would be the the writer for the adventure. He and his brother, J.Andrew Keith, were responsible for detailing much of what had been known to-date about the Aslan.

Keith's recent adventure material (ie. *The Kafer Sourcebook* & *Aurore Sourcebook* for GDW's 2300 A.D.) had been top notch, being both richly detailed and innovatively approached. I was pleased to find that his treatment for *The Blade of Koiyekh* maintained those high standards. The adventure could have been just a romp around Kusyu, but by Marc's allowing us to finally reveal the secret, it was much more.

Q.Why wouldn't Akkida and crew just scream to the whole cosmos about this?

A. Possession of the Aslan secret has potentially put the four characters in a no-win situation. If they reveal the news publicly, the Aslan may wish to *get even.* If the Akkida and company keep their mouths shut, then the secret can be maintained by the arrangement of a convenient accident.

However, I think that escape from this loop lies in Aslan psychology. If the four characters promised to keep the information secure, the Aslan would be forced to honor their word (unless they'd done something dramatically deceitful to warrant themselves unworthy of Aslan honor). If this arrangement was handled right, the four would be in stalemate with the twenty-nine.

Q.What are the future ramifications of the secret?

A.I don't know that this is really even a valid question, since, as Deb Zeigler pointed out, we already **know** the answer. Remember, our magazine's feature adventures are *historical*, with *The Blade of Koiyekh* taking place in 1109. Providing that the news does go public, that means that the Spinward Marches will be informed around 1111-12 (when Akkida and his companions return). Thus, game time, it's been eight years since the Imperium has known — and it has changed nothing.

Of course, one of the reasons that the news has little effect is that the Imperium as a whole has had more pressing things to worry about — like that little civil conflict they have on their hands.

I think even a bigger part of why there have been no noticeable repercussions is that the term *minor race* no longer carries a significant meaning. In contemporary Imperial life, it is a term which has outlived its usefulness as an instrument of determining pecking order.

With all that said, I think the long term effects of this revelation can be summed up by: 1) A slight increase in the number of bar fights and honor duels involving Aslan and humans, and 2) An uppity attitude by the Solomani with respect to the Aslan.

Regardless of what the Solomani or Imperial humans would like to think, the reality of the situation is that the Aslan **are** one of the major interstellar powers. I don't think any Solomani scout would dare to *Nyah-nyah* the Aslan when looking down the spinal mount of one of their battlecruisers (even person-to-person, it'd be a pretty dumb move).

MORE ASLAN COMMENTS

And of course, I had to throw in my two cents on the Aslan Revelation in a letter to a gamer...

You know, I found out about the Aslan secret in 1985, shortly after we formed Digest Group Publications. My reaction at the time was "Oh yeah? Why those sneaky devils!" Makes sense though — why look at where Kusyu is located — 2 parsecs from the border of the Solomani Confederation. What other major race homeworld is a mere two parsecs from another race's space?

I am surprised we're getting any negative reactions to this secret. The background is the background, and it is not developed carelessly. A lot of thought and consideration of the ramifications are given to major changes and their consequences. You have only seen the tip of the iceberg. If you only knew what this revelation really meant, the negative gamers wouldn't be so down-in-the-mouth about it all.

One thing we build into a lot of our background and adventures are profound lessons about ourselves. We don't want mamby-pamby adventures or background that is fluff and has no substance. To give substance, we add lessons about human nature to our stories. I've seen this in Traveller all along, and that's why I love the game so.

So, I'll spell it out here. We all place too much emphasis in our modern society on "labels". The label "minor race" was invented and foisted on races by the Vilani originally. The Vilani were a haughty lot, and if they could put down another race with mind games, they would do it. They were not card-carrying racists like the Solomani, the Vilani just want to keep the competitive edge, almost in a business sense. The Solomani want to run your life, even if that means moving in and telling you how to live it. And of course, the Solomani know best, in their opinion.

Anyway, the Solomani picked up on the minor race concept, and turned it into really dirty pool. A minor race was the scum of the galaxy. Then comes the Long Night. Once the Third Imperium arrives, the major/minor race concept is used in a benevolent way to differentiate races, but not to put a race down.

In a funny sort of way, the negative gamers are thinking like the Vilani, who invented the whole major/minor distinction in the first place. You are placing so much weight on a label. Who cares if you now know the Aslan are called a "minor" race. What does the term really mean, anyhow? Last month they were also a minor race, and you didn't know it. What has changed? Has the race changed? No. Just your attitude, based on a label. Kind of silly, wouldn't you say?

The bottom line? The destruction of the archaic and prejudiced distinction of major/minor race is long overdue. That

does not rule out other effects, either...like the six races question. Who ever said the six races had to be major races? I'll tell you who: the "major" races, that's who! After all we couldn't have a "minor" race ruin the neighborhood, could we?

Anyone who thinks being labeled a "minor" race makes one whit of difference is doing just what the "major" races want you to think. The neat thing is the Aslan were the only race to ignore the whole stupid distinction. In my book, that makes them greater than any so-called major race. The Aslan are a MEGA-RACE.

AND STILL MORE ASLAN COMMENTS

Yes, more of my Aslan comments in still another letter to other gamers...

Oh, we've got some whimpers about the Aslan revelation, but the "Blade" adventure in TD17 is running higher in popularity than the "Psionic Knights" adventure — which is the first time in four issues that the feature adventure has surpassed the "White Star — Rah" series written by Bill Connors.

We got similar "complaints" from some gamers when we released the Starship Operator's Manual. "That's not how jump drive works..." "You guys ruined the game..." etc. SOPM is our most popular product. TD17 is almost sold out — three months early. You decide. Our controversial products actually sell the best, so we like to see things get a bit heated (as long as it stays friendly).

The Traveller "mythos" built up the minor race label as a demeaning label deliberately just to preclude this revelation. This revelation is as old as Traveller itself, and Marc Miller carefully orchestrated the game's background development just so that this secret would have impact when it was revealed.

Unfortunately, it seems a few rather vocal gamers have let the knee-jerk reaction carry the day. C'mon guys. What does this revelation really mean in the Traveller universe? In most ways NOTHING — NOT A DARN THING. To those who see it for what it is, it simply proves the old theory that "jump drive is everything" is dead WRONG. A race's OWN DRIVE is everything. To some petty NPCs this revelation will be a reason to pick a fight — which means ADVENTURE.

Prior to the Rebellion in Traveller, many adventures had to be played so that the PC's were crooks doing illegal things. We didn't like that. We wanted a way to alter Traveller so you could have action and adventure — even huge starship battles — and not be a crook. You can now do that in the Rebellion. In fact, as the next couple of years wear on, it is going to be quite obvious how BAD Lucan really is, and he will be a villain who everyone can feel good about beating.

So it is with the Aslan revelation. NPCs who want to make a demeaning thing out of this situation are asking for trouble. We want the PCs to be on the side of the Aslan in such adventures, and anyone trying to start something over this will be the clear villains. Now the PC's have another noble cause to fight over. Much better, if you ask me.

Most people aren't upset because of the Aslan Revelation, and our sales of 17 have gone through the roof because of it. Contrary to what some of you have been saying, on the whole, our mail (70+ responses addressing this issue) indicates people are excited and want to know what this all means.

We haven't seen a sales surge like this since the Rebellion was introduced. Perhaps you die-hards are getting just a little too set in your ways?

AND SPEAKING OF LUCAN

At one point, we got a proposal from a gamer on a campaign sourcebook that let the PCs see Lucan up close and personal. Here were my thoughts back to that gamer on his proposal and on what kind of a guy Lucan is...

Most of the plot line of your proposal needs to be redone. Also, leave out the Rogue character generation.

Providing a way in Traveller for player characters to be crooks is a BAD idea. You attended the seminar at ORIGINS where Marc talked about trying to alter Traveller so that players wouldn't have to do things illegal. Never forget, TRAVELLER is upbeat, bigger than life, space opera. Your current plot line doesn't have that feeling.

Lucan needs to be a bad guy, true, but he also needs to be NORMAL in most areas. To make him an all-around crack pot will lower his power as a the major villain in Traveller. I picture Lucan as a subtle, but deadly backstabber. If he likes you, he comes off as a sensible, likeable, albeit a somewhat zealous person. He can make excellent arguments that are hard to refute for his actions — actions that it seemed he made in the heat of irrational emotions.

Then, after years of friendship, he will turn on you, in secret, and you are history. No reason — he just decided he was tired of you. Lucan's past is littered with people who disappeared without a trace, never to be heard from again. I'd build a plot line around this, where someone is trying to find out what happened to their father, etc, etc, and they eventually do find out, Lucan killed him, and there were (unknown to Lucan) witnesses of Lucan doing this terrible thing (a high-tech method of murder, such as anti-anagathics (rapid aging drugs), would be a lot of fun as Lucan's favorite murder technique).

Although the first sentence of the last paragraph may sound a lot like what Dulinor did to Strephon — Dulinor is, in fact, not a double crosser. In later years, Dulinor and Strephon bitterly disagreed over Imperial policy. Dulinor made no secret of the fact he approved less and less of Strephon's "damaging policies". All of Dulinor's closest advisors have been with him for years, and none have mysteriously disappeared.

Dulinor is a highly charismatic individual — Lucan comes off in public addresses as being "naive". Lucan's real forte is the small meeting of just a few individuals. Here he can sway individuals with surprising ability.

Hope that helps. Trash your original proposal and write up a new one. We'll see if we like it better.

—Joe

ABOUT THE VILANI

Here are couple letters I wrote to James Holden when he was editing the Vilani section of the first Alien volume...

James:

When the Long Night finally came, Vilani culture as known during the First Imperium was all but dead on an interstellar level. Many worlds throughout the sectors near Vland had a variant of Vilani culture — but it was on the world level only.

I think Vland's lowest time came during the Long Night. I see a "woe is me" attitude where Vland fell back to mid TL9. Many of the worlds around Vland were even worse off, falling to tech level 8 or less. Some of the worlds down Gushemege/Dagudashagg

way (actually a mix of Vilani-Solomani culture) recontacted Vland about -450 (along the Main) and got a kind of loose "trade alliance" going. By the time Vland was contacted by Third Imperium scouts, they had climbed to early tech 11 and were getting stronger but it was an uphill battle all the way — with the "traditionalists" a very vocal bunch.

During the Third Imperium, the Vilani-biased nobles tried several times to sway the moot/Imperial throne back to a more pure Vilani mindset, but to no avail. The Solomani-Vilani struggle forms a major political undercurrent to many of the political directions recorded in Imperial history (just look at the history of the Emperors, for instance).

So concurrent with Strephon's time has been another re-awakening and power swing in favor of the more traditional Vilani culture. Throw in the assassination and Lucan's unreasonable requests, and the region declaring its independence as the "Restored Ziru Sirka" makes sense.

How am I doing so far? More ideas? Comments? Criticisms? Snide remarks?

—Joe

James:

We've reached the end of the month, but not the end of the work, as you have noticed. But, we are not off by too much. By my estimate, I see we should finally be wrapping things up by mid-week next week (circa Feb 7, or so...). My do-or-die goal is to get this product shipping before month end. That give us until Feb 10 as a drop dead date for any last minute stuff. Any later than that and we'll never get it to the printers in time to make a month-end release.

Now, to address your questions...

Vland's temperature using WBH: Remember we discussed adding a "fudge factor" to the WBH temperature computations. You mentioned a +/- 1% fudge factor but then we noticed that 1% on a Kelvin temperature of 300 degrees is a range of 60 degrees. I believe we talked then about a 0.1% fudge factor, which would give a +/- 3 degree range (a much more reasonable range). Somehow, the results of this discussion never saw official print in WBH.

I think the discussion still applies, since WBH *is* more generalized. If you are getting 24 degrees C for Vland, that's 273+24, or 297 kelvin. Given this real example, I'd say the fudge factor ought to be more like 0.25%, which gives you +/- 8 degrees (more or less) on the computed base of 24 degrees. Go for the 18 degrees on this rationale.

Vland, the world, and its government details: Somewhere in the discussions with Terry and Mike J. we talked about the "ruling council of 300" on Vland proper. The Vilani have some fancy name for it, and, like everything else the Vilani seem to do, the members of the council live in a palace with all their needs provided for while they "work" for the council. How about the triad again, with 100 of each having a "shadow leader" and covering one of the three branches of government? Maybe these ideas will help.

The Vilani Space Essay: I'm doing drawings right now, rather than writing text. The back and forth change keeps me from getting stale. Plus, I get ideas about the region as I draw its details and review it's stats, which gives me material to draw on when it comes time to write about the region. I'll probably get to the section this weekend...can you wait til then?

RVE Ship registration: Good question. Where does it go? Well let me think. How about you doing a brief sidebar on "Policies in the New Ziru Sirka" (250 words, max) for me to put in the background essays, and then you cover it in game terms in the rules? Don't forget the later items too: Permits from a MegaCorp if an independent is to be legit. Then later, registration of all interstellar cargos — supposedly to protect the Vilani from outsiders stealing their goods and technology and carrying it over the borders. This way, even though your ship is legit, you must prove your cargo is too. The way I see it, there must be some REAL INTERESTING stuff going on at the RVE interstellar border as outsiders try to circumvent all this new legal garbage.

— Joe

AND FINALLY, GOOD LIBRARY DATA

Here's some comments Rob wrote and I passed on to James Holden explaining the DGP philosophy toward what makes good library data. Maybe some of you will find this helpful...

James:

I sent you a recent letter discussing some oversights in your editing of the library data entries, and you asked for specifics about what our "complaints" entailed.

Well, here are those specifics. Rob is going to become Editor on the new MegaTraveller Journal, and he has written some specific things for you to watch out for when you edit library data for MTJ.

Guidelines for writing library data for the MTJ

1. Entries should feel like an encyclopedia entry rather than a news item. Avoid phrases like "are soon expected too" and "just recently" — these date the entry too much.

2. Only use the terms Imperial and Imperium when really necessary. If you are referring to the Domain of Deneb and its interests, use "Domain" instead. The Imperium and the Domain are separate entities. We need to think more "shattered Imperium" when we write, so referring to the specific factions should become the preferred approach.

3. In most cases, avoid superlatives. Instead of saying a given facility is "the best", use "highly regarded" or "one of the best" instead.

4. Minimize historical detail and emphasize information that is useful to play. For example, when dealing with an alien race, its culture and physiology are much more important than its history of interaction with the Imperium. This is perhaps the biggest "flaw" in our published material to-date. We are not emphasizing the "fun to play" details foremost. The game is first meant to be played. I don't mean to sound alarmist, but if we don't watch out, we'll kill the game if we persist in emphasizing mounds of detail, none of which assists play.

Point #4 is perhaps the biggest problem with many outside manuscripts. I know you use a lot of HIWG documents as the source material for the library data, so you'll need to watch that one very close. We need more of a "let's play", rather than a "let's document" orientation.

I hope the material I've sent you on Knightfall accurately reflects my philosophy of "fun to play" rather than just "fun to read". I have tried hard in that product to "put my money where my mouth is" and illustrate how I currently think a good, useful adventure should be presented.

As always, I'd like to hear your thoughts on these things. The worst thing of all is for us to get so big for our britches that we no longer listen to other opinions or critical views.

—Joe

MEGATRAVELLER
Equipment Detail Sheet

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COMBINATION MASK

Tech level 10 version illustrated

EQUIPMENT STATISTICS

	TL	Type	Vol	Wt	Price
O	5	Combination Mask—5	1.5L	0.75kg	Cr150
O	7	Combination Mask—7	2.0L	1.0kg	Cr200
O	10	Combination Mask—10	1.5L	0.5kg	Cr200
O	14	Combination Mask—14	1.0L	0.35kg	Cr200

SUPPLEMENTAL STATISTICS (Optional)

	TL	Charge Duration	Operating Noise	Power Usage	Comments
O	5	4 hrs	whirring	60W	Use in atm 2,3
O	7	12 hrs	whirring	50W	Use in atm 2,3
O	10	24 hrs	hum	40W	Use in atm 2,3,5,7,9
O	14	7 days	soft hum	30W	Use in atm 2,3,5,7,9

USAGE RECORD (Optional)

Each square represents 12 hrs of usage

O TL5: ☒
O TL7: ☐
O TL10: ☐☐
O TL14: ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

CUSTOMIZING NOTES :

DESCRIPTION

The combination filter/compressor mask works as both a filter mask and a compressor. A filter mask allows an individual to breathe a tainted atmosphere, and a compressor allows an individual to breathe very thin (type 2 and 3) atmospheres.

The simplest model available at tech 5 is both a compressor *and* a filter. It cannot be just one or the other, which means the mask is useful only in atmosphere types 2 and 3. The face mask on the tech 5 model has the annoying tendency to fog up on the inside, which limits its use to short durations (under an hour) with breaks required.

Starting with the tech level 7 model, the face mask fogging problem is eliminated. Like the tech 5 model, the tech 7 model must operate as *both* a compressor and filter mask.

The tech level 10 and 14 models are selectable — they can be just a filter mask, just a compressor, or both. This makes the mask useful in all tainted atmosphere types, as well as being useful in very thin atmospheres.

All models, which make a noise while operating, are powered by built-in batteries that need to be recharged from time to time. The duration of a single charge is shown on the table above. To recharge, plug the mask into a standard power outlet for 3 hours.

TASK LIBRARY

To use a combination mask for duration of one power charge without incident:
Routine, End, Edu, absolute: 1 charge duration (fateful)
Referee: You can shortcut this task by using an absolute time of one week. To do such a shortcut, roll this task 4 times for a tech level 5 mask; 3 times for a tech level 7 mask; twice for a tech level 10 mask, or once for a tech level 14 mask.

To repair a damaged combination mask:
(varies), Mechanical, Edu, [varies]
Referee: Difficulty depends on damage level. Use the standard damage and repair guidelines. Time increments for shop repairs are as follows:

Superficial damage ..... 30 sec.
Minor damage ..... 2 min.
Major damage ..... 10 min.
Destroyed ..... 1 hr.

For field repairs, double time and difficulty level.

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